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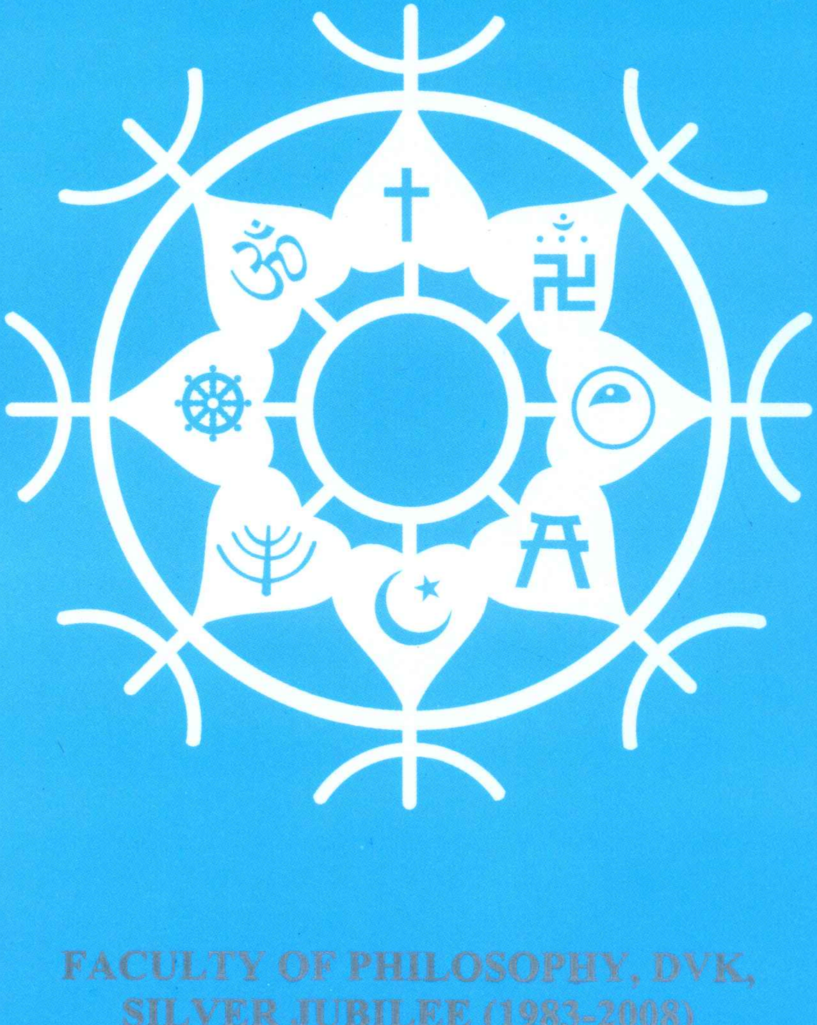

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SILVER JUBILEE (1983-2008)
COMMEMORATIVE VOLUME

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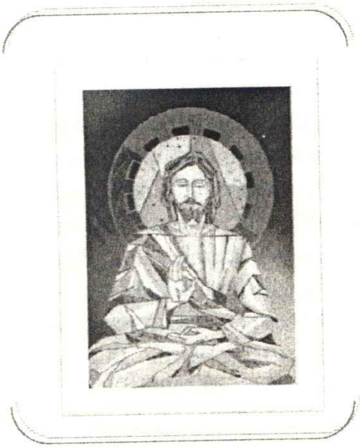
Editorial

PHILOSOPHY AT DHARMARAM AND AN INTEGRAL OUTLOOK

‘Dharmaram’, translated as a ‘garden of virtues’ and symbolizing the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is a name the founding fathers of Dharmaram College have consciously and purposefully selected to initiate the process of nurturing a noble legacy of integration that would mould a group of human beings and a set of institutions for the coming generations. It is an *ārām*, a garden, where everything has its constitutive role, resulting in the very formation of the garden itself. The garden, in turn, sets the dynamic ambience where each person and each thing can find its rightful and meaningful place. Indeed, primarily, the garden that the Dharmaram is, as the Sacred Heart of Jesus, symbolises a nurturing ground of human beings who would blossom into persons endowed with virtues, i.e., with an integral outlook that would pave the way for oneself and others, along with the whole nature, to co-exist and pro-exist, and work for the establishment of a just and dialogically vibrant society.



Dharmaram College, which celebrated its golden jubilee in 2007, was originally established to provide philosophical and theological education to Catholic men with the intention of training Catholic priests and Christian leaders.[1] The motto of Dharmaram College is “*Īśabhakti paraṁjñānam*,” which literally means

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[1] The vision enshrined in the Gospels, and later articulated in the “Declaration on Christian Education,” has been very much part of the legacy of Dharmaram: “to make a more penetrating inquiry into the various aspects of the sacred science so that an ever deepening understanding of Sacred Revelation is obtained, the legacy of Christian wisdom handed down by our forefathers is more fully developed, the dialogue with our separated brethren and with non-Christians is fostered, and answers are given to questions arising from the development of doctrine.” Vatican Council II, “Declaration on Christian Education,” §11.

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"devotion to the Lord is Supreme Wisdom." Dharmaram College, therefore, "pays constant attention to the spiritual values to be cultivated by the students, as well as to a thorough and profound intellectual discipline to be acquired by them through *īśabhakti* (devotion to the Lord) and its ever flowing *paraṁjñānam* (knowledge par excellence), leading them to an integral transformation."[2]

In course of time, however, its horizons were opened up to the needs of the people of Bangalore, thus, initiating various educational endeavours on and off the campus, a move that has now become a mark of quality education under the leadership of Christ University.[3] As per the statistics available this year, Dharmaram campus caters to more than 15,000 students on a daily basis, and the courses offered range from pre-primary education to doctoral studies in specialised subjects.

Dharmaram, through its allied and affiliated institutions, has moulded a myriad of good citizens, educators, scientists, social workers, etc., from the secular perspective, and a galaxy of well-motivated and dedicated Christian priests, religious, missionaries, and lay leaders who continue to stand in good stead in the multi-faceted fields of Christian service carried out both within and outside India. What is characteristic of the training imparted in this campus, which has become the 'Dharmaram legacy', is the successful insistence on the formation of an integral outlook. History will testify to the fact that the Dharmaram style of education stands in good stead in enabling her wards to meet the challenges of the changing times within India as well as outside.

In an attempt to take stock of the evolution of Dharmaram legacy, I shall briefly recall a few landmarks. The Sacred Heart Study House of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, a Catholic religious seminary founded in 1918 at Chethipuzha, Kerala, was shifted to Bangalore in 1957 and was given the name Dharmaram College. On December 8, 1965, Dharmaram College was affiliated to the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, by a decree of the Congregation for Catholic Education. On January 6, 1976, by the decree *Nobilissimae Indiarum Gentes*, the Congregation for Catholic Education established in Dharmaram College a Faculty of Theology with the rights and powers to confer the Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Theology and Bachelor's degree in Philosophy.

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[2] *Directory of Dharmaram College 2003-04*, inside cover page.

[3] It was with a view to achieve an integrated study of sacred sciences along with secular subjects that Dharmaram College started on its campus, in 1969, an arts, science, and commerce college, which has achieved "deemed to be university" status in 2008. This prestigious institution, Christ University, along with Christ Junior Colleges, Christ Schools, and Krista Vidyalaya, offers multi-faceted academic programmes, including research degrees, and operates now in its various on- and off-campus centres across India.

In 1975, with a view to widen the scope of ecumenical activities, Dharmaram, under the auspices of its theology wing, worked out a programme of collaboration in the field of religion, philosophy, and culture with the United Theological College, Bangalore. A one-year diploma course in Spirituality and Counselling, started in 1992-93, was enhanced into a two-year master's degree programme in 2004. Apart from these developments, in 1994, an extension centre for the study of theology named *Samanvaya Theological College* was established with its headquarters in Bhopal in the state of Madhya Pradesh for a contextualized theological formation in view of the changing pastoral and missionary scenario and the corresponding theological reflection (Its other regional centres are in Jagdalpur, with its specific thrust on the Tribal cultures, and Rishikesh, with its unique ambience of multi-religious dynamism). Under the auspices of the Faculty of Theology there is a one-year diploma course in Theology and Religious Sciences, specially designed for the consecrated religious women, which is conducted at *Jnanodaya* (Bangalore). In 1999, an Institute of Oriental Canon Law was established (aggregated to the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome), which offers a three-year licentiate programme in Oriental Canon Law. Further, in 2004, the Centre for Biblical Studies was reconstituted to become the Centre for Biblical and Theological Studies; this centre offers a one-year diploma course in Bible and Theology especially for the laity in and around Bangalore. In 2007, the Faculty of Theology started its bi-annual journal, *Asian Horizons*, indenting to avail platform of Dharmaram integral theological deliberation to a wider audience through the publication of scholarly articles that would see to the blending of Christian vision and Oriental patrimony in the existential crucible of the Indian milieu.

Along with theological and secular university education, from its inception itself, Dharmaram had initiated her students into various philosophical streams of thought. It is a matter of pride that the founding fathers of this temple of learning made it a point that all her students are acquainted with the philosophical patrimony of the Indian thought along with other secular and Christian schools of thought. Taking into account the fact of religious pluralism in India and the need of equipping her students to positively respond to it, Dharmaram instituted, in 1971, Centre for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) with the noble intention of fostering better understanding of the various religious traditions; it continues to work for the promotion of research in the area of religious dialogue by imparting short term and long term regular programmes to national and international student groups. In 1975, Dharmaram College also started the publication of *Journal of Dharma*, an international quarterly for the scientific study of religions and philosophies, with a commitment to enhance research in the fields of inter-religious dialogue, ecumenism, and philosophy, and, thus, to contribute to the development of indigenous philosophies and theologies. It was by the decree *Antiquissima Indorum*,[4] dated December 8, 1983, the Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome, created the Faculty of Philosophy in perpetuity. In the same year, an extension centre of philosophy, *Darsana Institute of Philosophy*, was established at Wardha in the state of Maharashtra.

Dharmaram has made a lasting and far reaching impact within the Indian Church through its existence over a period of fifty years. Her academic excellence is recognized and sought after by many other institutions; the lead given by Dharmaram has been carried over by many other scholars and institutions in India.[5] In an attempt to impart the integral vision to the people of other cultures and continents, Dharmaram has opened up its horizons to wider international audience at two international centres, one in Rome (Chavara Institute for Indian and Interreligious Studies) and the other in Sacramento, California, USA (Chavara International Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies).

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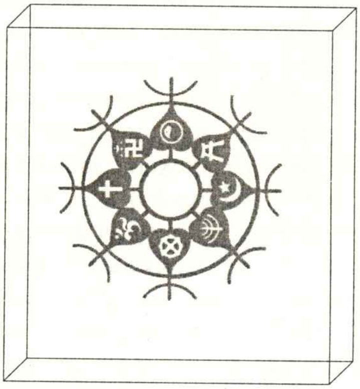
[4] Interestingly, naming of the documents establishing faculties in Dharmaram – "*Nobilissimae Indiarum Gentes*" (1976, Faculty of Theology) and "*Antiquissima Indorum*" (1983, Faculty of Philosophy) – very clearly indicates the 'Indian' thrust that Dharmaram nourishes all through her existence. I believe that it was providential as well as intentional on the part of the Congregation for Catholic Education to word the documents in this manner so that the specific thrust and the goal of instituting these faculties in Dharmaram will have a bearing on its programme of learning and research. Indeed, to those who are familiar with the Indian view of life, there is no need to make any specific mention of the integral outlook: it is the quintessence of all that 'Indian' is.

[5] During the past years a number of institutions of ecclesiastical studies have been affiliated to DVK. Prominent among them are the Vidyadeep Institute of Theology, Bangalore (1988), belonging to the Conference of Religious India, Carmelaram Theology College, Bangalore (1989), belonging to the Order of Discalced Carmelites, De Paul Institute of Religion and Philosophy, Bangalore (2001), belonging to the Vincentian Congregation, Pushparam Institute of Philosophy, Mysore (2003), belonging to the Order of Discalced Carmelites, and Ruhalaya Major Seminary, Ujjain, belonging to the Missionaries of Saint Thomas.

As the Faculty of Philosophy celebrates its silver jubilee in 2008-2009, I am pleased to affirm that the professors as well as the students of this faculty have played a pivotal role in the development of an integral outlook that has become the characteristic feature of Dharmaram legacy over the years. The ground-breaking initiatives of the stalwarts like John Britto Chethimattam, Thomas Aykara, Francis Vineeth Vadakkethala, Thomas Kadankavil, Albert Nambiaparambil, Thomas Mampra, Thomas Manickam, Cyriac Kanichai, Gabriel Aranjaniyil, etc., who had been the backbone of philosophical education in Dharmaram over a period of 30 years have opened up new avenues in Indian Christian thought. It must be respectfully acknowledged that the noble vision of Jonas Thaliath, Canisius Thekkekara, Januarius, Paulinus Jeerakath, Mathias Mundadan, Joseph Pathrapankal, etc., had the foundational role in the flourishing of the unique mode of philosophical programme at Dharmaram; moreover, their own innovative theological deliberations have had a catalyst effect in promoting the integral mode of philosophical education within Dharmaram and in many other institutions across India. The much acclaimed Indian theology, to my mind, had its roots in the pioneering work done by these talented and erudite philosophers and visionaries.

Just as everything has an integral place in a garden, the programme of philosophy that was designed by the visionaries of Dharmaram took care to make a blend of sacred and profane, religious and secular, East and West, Christian and Indian, without losing sight of the 'little' traditions (although it took a long time for their official recognition) and 'unorthodox' schools of thought. Addition of two important centres – Centre for the Dalit Studies and Centre for Women Studies – is hailed as important and insightful steps in the evolution of Dharmaram legacy.

The careful planning initiated by the teaching faculty insisted on an integral balance of the subjects taught in the curriculum. Without sacrificing the academic requirements stipulated by the Congregation for Catholic Education and the perennial philosophical patrimony of the Catholic tradition, a meticulously planned programme was put in place, with the intention that a student who passes through the portals of Dharmaram should have not only a deeper theoretical understanding of human thought evolved through various secular and religious traditions, but also should have a lasting respect for their vision of life and ennobling practices. This was not a mere pious wish, but a definitive project, which also included equipping students to acquire the critical acumen to approach these same traditions with a view to engage in constructive dialogue as well as critical and creative appreciation. Of course, this goal amounted to additional working hours both for the teaching faculty and the students; however, as it is an outlook gravely in need, especially in the disturbed pluralistic contexts of India and the wider global horizons due to their too late realization and recognition of the plurality of religions and cultures, all at Dharmaram have taken to heart this noble responsibility and have invested the best of resources into it.



The integral outlook introduced in the academic programmes is creatively supported by two main organs of Dharmaram: the Centre for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) and the *Journal of Dharma*, the international quarterly of religions and philosophies. While the CSWR conducted regular wide-ranging programmes to equip the wider public of Bangalore city and others, especially in fostering better understanding among various religious, cultural, and ethnic traditions, *Journal of Dharma* made Dharmaram platform' available to the international audience through the publication of research articles and reviews on issues pertaining to religions and philosophies. While the former mainly catered to the local audience through discourses, dialogues, and experiential prayer/sharing sessions, the latter toiled in initiating mutual understanding and respect among various traditions and disseminating the same to international centres of higher learning, by bringing together the best minds around the world through its quarterly publications. These two arms of the faculty of philosophy have been, therefore, instrumental in making the faculty very vibrant over the years, and making its vision and presence felt all over the world.

Further, the research programmes, both at the licentiate and doctoral levels, have been successful in eliciting interest among students to dwell deeper into the wisdom of wide ranging traditions. It is a matter of pride that some excellent theses at the licentiate and PhD levels have been published and are well acclaimed by experts as well as the erudite public. Moreover, the training imparted at the licentiate level has had a very successful catalyst effect, as most of the scholars trained at Dharmaram have assumed their responsibility of teaching philosophy or theology at various centres. They, in turn, carry forward the noble Dharmaram tradition of integral philosophical education in the institutions they have assumed their office.[6] In one of the editorials in *Journal of Dharma*, I wrote about the Dharmaram legacy of education as follows:

> … Dharmaram has taken the lead in initiating positive steps in inculcating a healthy approach towards different religions, cultures, and linguistic groups. Many who have passed out of this institute have changed batons with the succeeding generations in the field of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue and harmony. The success of "Dharmaram-style education" could also be attributed to her ability to integrate nature with nurture, the human with the divine, the secular with the religious, and the profane with the sacred. It enables each of her wards to be human beings thoroughly rooted in their own culture and tradition, but at the same time transcending their bounds and boundaries to share the riches of our common human destiny and to reach out to the unseen and unexplored horizons, thus, constituting the supreme wisdom as the ultimate aim of education.[7]

This noble and effective chain will set a new phase and face in inculcating positive outlook and approach among/toward various traditions, even if apparently they seem to be antagonistic in theory and practice.

The opening of Dharmaram Academy for Distance Education (DADE), in 2007, is a milestone in taking the integral vision of Dharmaram to a wider audience. In the age of information technology and information explosion, DADE could reach out to many who cannot come to the campus on a daily basis. In just one year, this Academy has successfully launched post-graduate diploma programmes in seven different areas, including philosophy. Here is a laudable step that will have a lasting and effective impact in the years to come, especially in spreading the message of integral outlook far and wide.

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[6] Research in philosophy has assumed a new dimension with the opening of the Department of Philosophy at Christ University, which is practically constituted by the members of the Faculty of Philosophy, DVK. In 2006, the MA in Philosophy was introduced and, in 2008, the MPhil in Philosophy was also opened up. We expect that Christ University would begin its doctoral research programme in 2009, with more emphasis on inter-disciplinary research. As the research in philosophy is opened up to the wider 'secular' public, we earnestly hope that our goal of spreading the message of integral philosophy will get further boost and wider recognition.

[7] Saju Chackalackal, "Religion and Education: A Philosophical Appraisal" (Editorial), *Journal of Dharma* 31, 2 (April-June 2006), 161-62.

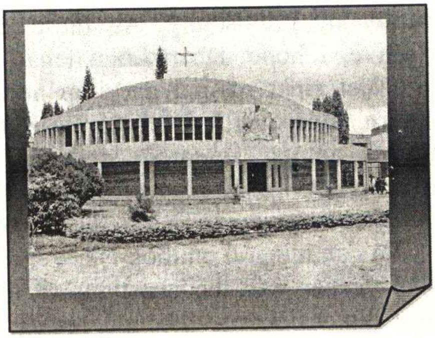
Our philosophical engagements are not one of denying the existence of other traditions and schools of thought, but of recognizing the other/s, responding to the issues raised from such recognition, and of engaging in ongoing dialogues. That is, there is an existential realization that our life world is fundamentally plural, that there is the possibility of divergent viewpoints and life visions, without precluding one's own meaningful and dynamic existence. Yet, our programme does not leave all these discrete entities as mere parts of the plural, but enables every individual to evolve an integral viewpoint for oneself. In fact, Dharmaram does not serve a ready-made solution to the reality of plurality, but enables her scholars to weave and blend together their own view of life.

It might be emerging from the very Indian mindset that the training in philosophy was never restricted to secular philosophers and their philosophies. The fundamental religious outlook that Dharmaram has assumed always made room for recognizing and incorporating the religious wisdom bequeathed to humanity by renowned teachers and founders of religions. As their insights have been effective in moulding the outlook of generations, mostly for good, our philosophical programme has a significant focus on philosophies emerging from various religious traditions. The integral outlook that we facilitate in our scholars makes sure that no valid contribution as far as the human thought is concerned is neglected; on the contrary, we make sure that due recognition is paid to religious as well as non-religious viewpoints so much so that the perspective of life that a scholar develops will have the possibility of recognizing contrary and even contradictory viewpoints. We insist that every scholar is enabled to balance the creative tensions existing among contrary and contradictory and opposing forces: indeed, here is the blending of the physical and the metaphysical, the rational and the mystic, the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine.

As most of the students attending our programme of philosophy are Christians, specifically Catholics, the cornerstone of their philosophical endeavours fundamentally turns out to be the faith in the person of Jesus

Christ. Here, I hold that such a point of view, having its centre in Jesus Christ, does not go against cultivating an open and integral attitude towards other traditions; instead, it provides the best ambience for lasting integration. In fact, it is the very catholic Christic life vision that takes us beyond the limiting horizons of one's self and all that is immediate. The Christic model of self-emptying for the sake of engendering life in the other is the most generous approach in life and philosophy that anybody can adopt. It begins with the integration of oneself with the others, one's interests with that of the others, which ultimately climaxes in harmonizing every stream of thought, strengthening the bonds, and widening the horizons in view of building up a new earth and new heaven, the *dharma rajya*, the kingdom of God.

The Silver Jubilee celebration of the Faculty of Philosophy at Dharmaram is an occasion to take stock of what we have attained so far and, thus, to feel proud of it, which is indeed a justified sentiment. However, as twenty-five years is only a very short period as far as human achievements are concerned, this jubilee celebration shall be taken as an occasion to plan for the future so that the goal of an integral outlook could be better realized in the coming years, especially as the times are changing and the challenges are mounting. In the last twenty-five years, Faculty of Philosophy at Dharmaram, as a tree that has been offering shade and vital life to many seekers of wisdom, has got firmly rooted and has spread its branches far and wide; as a stream that has been flowing and nourishing everyone on its either banks, it continues to flow serenely, enriching and enhancing all who want to quench their thirst from her ever-flowing waters of wisdom. Now, the challenge is to let the tree grow taller and stronger to offer better shade and life to many more, and to flow more dynamically into the lives of many, so that the goal of integration not only remains intact but becomes all the more vibrant and life-enhancing.



As the needs and expectation of the society are changing, it is necessary that our programme is revamped in such way that all our scholars are equipped to respond to the existential situation more creatively. Apart from initiating scholars into the age-old wisdom of humanity, especially at the research levels, Dharmaram must chalk out plans to infuse in them a creatively critical and a critically creative approach to various traditions and schools of thought. Further, some important elements, which were side-tracked by the elitist tendency, must be reinstated to the mainstream of philosophical endeavours. They would include further research and studies into the ecological concerns, the subaltern traditions, the feminist movements, post-modern trends in philosophy, etc. The new centres like Centre for Dalit Studies and Centre for Women Studies should assume active role in chalking out programmes for day-scholars as well as wider public, so that an effective conscientization could be initiated. Further, I wish that the Silver Jubilee celebrations also become an occasion to initiate processes to start a new Centre for Environmental Philosophy and Action under the auspices of the Faculty of Philosophy. As these centres become more vibrant and effective, I hope, Dharmaram legacy will regain some dimensions that were lost sight of and open up new vistas in its further philosophical sojourn. Moreover, centres of these stature should be capable of eliciting interest among research students so that more effective research programmes would evolve, thus, initiating more dynamism and broader ambience for integration into the life of Dharmaram itself.

As an integral outlook is never a finished product, Dharmaram has to delve deeper into the questions of ultimate interest, and bring in many more dimensions of life and reality into its philosophical scrutiny and synthesis. It is also high-time that new programmes are designed in such a way that they would respond to the needs of the new generation of information sciences and the emerging social problems. As philosophy could engage in these issues with a healthy distance, the solutions proposed could naturally open up new and better avenues in social life. The faculty as well as the research scholars must become more integral in their outlook and proactive in responding to the current vexing issues of the Indian and international society, which I hope would give a better edge to our programmes, opening up wider horizons, and offering deeper meaning to the existence of the Faculty of Philosophy at Dharmaram.

Saju Chackalackal
Chief Editor, JD

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HUMAN SUBJECTIVITY

A Philosophical Investigation after Wittgenstein

Jose Nandhikkara◆

1. Introduction

Wittgenstein often labelled his later philosophical investigations as "grammatical investigations" (*PR* 52, *PG* 71, PI 90, 150).[1] According to him, "A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words. – Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity" (*PI* 122). This is true about the words that we use for human beings. Besides the proper names and personal pronouns, we use words like ego, self, soul, mind, spirit, reason, will, etc., to define, describe, or refer to human beings. By arranging Wittgenstein's relevant remarks I would like to render a synoptic view of 'human being' showing various connexions as well as differences of our uses of words that refer to human subjectivity. "Language," Wittgenstein wrote, "is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about" (*PI* 203). The object of philosophy is to provide us with an *Übersicht* of our use of words so that we know our way about (*PI* 123). Besides labyrinth, Wittgenstein used the metaphors of fly-bottle (*PI* 309) and jigsaw puzzle (*BB* 46)[2] to draw our attention to certain pitfalls and confusions in many philosophical questions. We are driven to certain ways of thinking which are far from the actual use of words. "The thing to do in such cases," according to Wittgenstein, "is always to look how the words

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[1] *PR* = Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, R. Rhees, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975; *PG* = Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, R. Rhees, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974; *PI* = Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953. References from the Part I of *PI* are to the numbers of the sections and that of the Part II are to page numbers.

[2] *BB* = Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.

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in question are actually used in our language" (*BB* 56). For, "only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning" (*Z* 173).[3] Our real need in life is the norm of our philosophical investigations.

A grammatical investigation, after Wittgenstein, is undertaken here in order to bring to light the use of words that refer to human subjectivity. The aim is to have a synoptic view of the actual use of the words and the concepts involved so that we get a picture of the concept of human being. According to Wittgenstein, "the idea that the real I lives in my body is connected with the peculiar grammar of the word 'I', and the misunderstanding this grammar is liable to give rise to" (*BB* 66). "How the words 'I', 'self', 'body', 'mind', 'soul', etc., are used?" is the question that we should raise if we want to clarify the nature of these concepts as well as the nature of human subject. Questions like 'What is I, body, soul, etc.?' are confusing and misleading; they are the result of wrong pictures (such as all words are names referring to objects similar to physical objects) that hold us captives. The division of a human being into body and soul results from our failure to understand the actual use of these words. First of all, 'soul', 'spirit', 'mind', 'reason', 'will', etc., are not used to refer to something in the way 'body' refers to a body. Secondly, we need to look and see the actual uses of these words in relation to human being. For example, though we say, 'I have a body', it is different from 'I have a pen' or even 'I have a hand'. Like other objects, I occupy a space, but I am not my body. Though we can say 'I am a body', the expression 'my body' shows certain distinctness between a human being and human body and we say 'I am not my body'. When we use expressions like 'I have a soul (mind, will, etc.)' it is different from 'I have a body'. 'I can search my soul'; but it is not like searching in my room. We say 'I make up my mind', but I am not my mind. 'I can bring up something into my mind'; it is not, however, bringing something into my room or into my body. 'My soul/mind/will', like 'my body', shows certain distinctness but cannot be separated from 'my being'. It would only add to the confusion if we think that the distinctions are similar to those between different kinds of things like chairs and tables. We would fail to see the categorical differences and similarities.

Wittgenstein is brilliant in reminding us of the differences in uses of body and soul/mind/will in relation to a human being. The sketches relating to the grammar of 'body' illuminate our embodied nature and our sharing in the animal kingdom. The sketches on 'soul', 'mind', 'will', etc., on their part point to the subjective dimensions of human being. These two ways of speaking about human beings are interwoven in a number of ways. "Here we have two different language-games and a complicated relation between them. – If you try to reduce their relations to a simple formula you go wrong" (*PI* 180). This is far more realistic and consistent with Wittgenstein's later philosophy and philosophical method than his earlier framework in which, from a third-person perspective, human beings are seen, like other material substances, plants, and animals, as bodies and from a first-person perspective, they "shrink to a point without extension" (*TLP* 5.64).[4] A grammatical investigation, after Wittgenstein, will show the primitiveness of the concept 'human being' and its relation to human body and soul.

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[3] *Z* = Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, eds., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967.

In the following three sections I 'look closer' into the Wittgensteinian sketches that are related to soul/mind/will, body, and human being. Wittgenstein's investigations on the 'inner' show a family resemblance term that includes in its fibres expressions with 'soul', 'mind', 'reason', 'will', etc., and refers to all the human characteristics that are not bodily. These characteristics give certain mental and spiritual identity and unity to living human beings. It is a 'delusion' to treat the inner as something bodily or to deny its reality. Though the inner is expressed in and through the body it is wrong to see them as two separate entities that are united contingently. Body and human being are presented as the best pictures of the human soul and unlike other pictures I cannot show what they are pictured of as independently verifiable facts. They correspond to the concept of a soul. These pictures have to be used in different ways from our pictures that picture empirical realities. They are not given in the language of information; but they are not without cognitive content. They have different roles. They are more like how people express their love in a variety of ways – poems, metaphors, letters, etc. They give expression to their soul. A poetic expression is different from a scientific proposition or a mathematical formula. An image (*Vorstellung*)[5] is not a picture (*Bild*), but a picture (*Bild*) can correspond to it' (*PI* 301). Pictures of human body and human being can correspond to the idea (*Vorstellung*) of a human soul.

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[4] *TLP* = Wittgenstein, L. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, C. K. Ogden, trans., London: Routledge, 1922.

[5] Though *Vorstellung* could be translated as image, it does not give its contrast with *Bild* as picture. *Vorstellung* is here better understood as idea, concept or

2. "I Presuppose the Inner insofar as I Presuppose a Human Being" (*LW* II, 84)

Descartes rightly observed that "one can perfectly well engage in first-person thinking even though one is not in a position to keep track of oneself as a physical object."[6] From the observation that 'I could suppose I had no body', 'but not that I was not', he, however, wrongly postulated an ego that owns and controls the body. To say that a human being has such-and-such a sort of body is not to imply that the person is a thinking thing that owns that body. Descartes, who argued for such a view, admitted that the soul is not merely present in the body as a sailor is present in a ship, but rather very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that soul and the body form a unit. They are two separate entities and it is the 'thinking thing' that owns and controls the body and their unity is contingent. To hold that "the ego is mental" (*BB* 73) is to place oneself in a long tradition, starting with Plato, of isolating the spiritual from the physical.

Wittgenstein argued that to say that "a human being is not a body," does not necessarily imply that some new entity besides body, namely, the ego, has been discovered (*WL* 60).[7] It is equally true that a human being is not identical with ego or some other entity – a mind, soul, spirit, or will. As I cannot identify my self with my body, I cannot do so with my mind. A human being is neither a body nor a mind. However, a human being is not without a mind or a body. It is true that we do not assign psychological predicates to the body and its parts, but we cannot ascribe them to the mind either. Otherwise it would be the mind that sees, smells, feels, thinks, desires, decides, etc. This is a difficult situation, because we want to say: 'it cannot be a 'nothing''. In order to avoid this embarrassment, "I presuppose the inner insofar as I presuppose a human being" (*LW* 84).[8] In

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imaginative representation.

[6] Campbell, *Past, Space and Self*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, 90.

[7] *WL* = Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932-35: From the Notes of Alice Ambrose and Margaret Macdonald*, A. Ambrose, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979.

[8] *LW* = Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on The Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 2, G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, eds., C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue, trans., London: Basil Blackwell, 1992

the very next sentence, however, Wittgenstein remarks: "The 'inner' is a delusion. That is: the whole complex of ideas alluded to by this word is like a painted curtain drawn in front of the scene of the actual word use." The 'inner' is a delusion, if we think that it is something similar to other physical objects that can be located, named, described, and defined. It is also not like the inside of something, a box, for example, or something like an inner room or inner cave. However, this is not a denial of 'inner'; it means the inner cannot be spoken of in the language of object and designation. The inner corresponds to human subjectivity.

According to Wittgenstein, the assumption of the ego as an independent entity results from philosophical confusions. When we are forced to recognise that the word 'I' is not used, in some important occasions, to designate a body we look for an immaterial one (*BB* 47). "Where our language suggests a body and there is none: there, we should like to say, is a spirit" (*PI* 36). This is because of the bewitching power of the picture of the language in which words always seem to name objects. According to this picture, the meaning of a word is the object for which the word stands (*PI* 1). If body is not a proper object for self, we feel forced to posit an immaterial substance – the real ego (*BB* 69). In his view, "to say that the ego is mental is like saying that the number 3 is of a mental or an immaterial nature, when we recognize that the numeral '3' isn't used as a sign for a physical object" (*BB* 73). What we need to do is to remind ourselves of the fact that 'inner' is not a name of a material or immaterial object. That is not denying the reality of the inner. What is resisted is our temptation to treat it as a material or ethereal object. We remind ourselves that the inner is not bodily; 'inner' does not refer to something in the way 'body' refers to body. It is not the inner that is deluding; it is to assume the inner as an object, material or ethereal, that is the delusion. "There are inner and outer concepts, inner and outer ways of looking at human beings. Indeed, there are also inner and outer facts – just as there are, for example, physical and mathematical facts. But they do not stand to each other like plants of different species" (*LW* 63). They relate to each other in a variety of ways in the stream of our life and thought. "The inner is tied up with the outer not only empirically, but also logically" (*LW* 63). Wittgenstein is realistic about the inner; but we should not see it as an object similar to a material object. Wittgenstein does not assume that all that is real is empirical. According to him, 'Not empiricism and yet realism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing' (*RFM* 325).[9] In his famous example of shopping for 'five red apples', he has shown that we use words differently. 'Five', 'red', and 'apple' are meaningful words and they are used differently in our language and life. 'Body' and 'soul' are used differently.

To see the empirical as well as logical inter-relations of 'body' and 'soul', we have to examine how the words which stand for the 'soul' and the 'body' are used in our actual language. Following Wittgenstein, instead of searching for an ostensive definition of 'soul/mind/will', we should better raise the question, 'How is the word 'soul/mind/will' used?'(refer *PI* 370). As with the use of 'my body', the expression 'my mind/soul/will' points to a distinction between 'soul/mind/will' and the possessor. We want to draw attention to the fact that it is not the soul that perceives, thinks, remembers, loves, wills, believes, etc.; a human being is the subject of these predicates. It is wrong to give a pre-eminence to the soul. Wittgenstein does not want to treat "the head and heart as loci of the soul" (*PG* 106). 'What sort of entity is the 'inner'?', like 'What sort of entity is a number?', can only be answered insisting that the 'inner', like a number, is not an entity of a sort; neither empirical nor metaphysical, neither bodily nor spiritual. But it is not a 'nothing' either. It is not just a matter of opinion that a living human has a soul (mind/spirit/will) (refer *PI* 178). That a living human being has a soul is my fundamental attitude in dealing with living human beings. It is not, however, something about which we can talk in the language of physical things. The inner confers a kind of unity to the living human being that is categorically different from the unity conferred by the body. It is a unity that is captured especially from within, from the first-person perspective. According to Luntley, "having a mind involves having a point of view upon the world in the sense that it involves experiencing the world in a certain way."[10] The subject's point of view, though not expressible in the language of empirical sciences, is something very important to our life as human beings.

'Inner' is a word in our language that has a number of uses. It is, in Wittgensteinian terms, a family resemblance concept like 'game'. There are no necessary and sufficient conditions for the use of the terms that refer to 'inner'. We use 'mind', 'soul', 'spirit', 'reason' 'will', etc., to refer to what we indicate by human subjectivity. If we look and see at all these terms and their use, what we observe is 'a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail'. We could say that words referring to 'inner' 'form a family'. There is no single property (or a sum of properties) like a fibre that runs through the whole length of the thread, on the part of all and only phenomena so called but only overlapping of many fibres (*PI* 66-67). A grammatical investigation gives a description of the various uses of these words clarifying the existence and nature of the inner. It is used in our language as a principle to unite all the mental, rational, and spiritual characteristics, something characteristic of human beings. Though we can make sense of the demonstrative 'this body', we cannot make sense of 'this mind (soul/spirit/will)'. We could only say, "I meant my mind, but could only point to it via my body" (*BB* 66). I examine further, in the next section, Wittgenstein's struggles to throw light on the relation between mind/soul/spirit and body.

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[9] *RFM* = Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees and G. E. M. Anscombe, eds., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978.

[10] Luntley, *Reason, Truth and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned*, London: Routledge, 1995, 57.

3. "The Human Body is the Best Picture of the Human Soul" (*PI* 178)

Human beings, as a rule, are recognized by the appearance of their bodies. The characteristics of a human body do change, but gradually and within a recognizable range. "We are inclined to use personal names in the way we do, only as a consequence of these facts." "If facts were different," for example, "all human bodies which exist looked alike" or "the shape, size and characteristics of behaviour periodically undergo a complete change," then, the use of names would also change. Thus, the use of the concept of an individual human being depends on certain contingent facts (*BB* 61-62). This, as far as philosophy is concerned, should be treated not only as an empirical fact but also as a logical fact. "The inner is tied up with the outer logically, and not just empirically" (*LW* 64). Often Wittgenstein reminds us that language-games and forms of life and the words and concepts that are interwoven with them are closely connected with facts about human nature and the nature of the world. "If we imagine the facts otherwise than they are, certain language-games lose some of their importance, while others become important" (*OC* 63).[11] For example, legal concepts presuppose "a scaffolding of facts," particularly a normal human background (*Z* 350). To have different concepts, "we would have to be made in such a way that all of us or almost all of us in fact would react in the same way under the same circumstances" (*LW* 23). Similarly, mathematics is "an anthropological phenomenon" (*RFM* 180). Though mathematical concepts and procedures are *sui generis*, it is the "facts of daily experience" that give them their importance (*RFM* 3). Induction is made logically possible by the regularity of events (*OC* 618). Actions like walking, eating, and bringing up children are part of our natural history (*PI* 25, 467). Expecting, loving, and hoping arise only in certain surroundings and situations (*PI* 481, 583). If we did not laugh and smile at jokes, cry and weep when hurt, turn pale, shiver, and run away when in danger, then our shared concepts of joy, pain, and fear would not have their roles in our form of life. At the bottom, our language-games in which our words and concepts are interwoven are ways of acting and ways of living (*OC* 204). The words that we use to talk about human subjectivity are interwoven with our characteristic ways of acting and living.

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[11] *OC* = Wittgenstein, On Certainty, G. E M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, eds., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.

I can talk about myself and in this regard sometimes I do talk about my body, which is a material thing that can be identified and described like other material bodies in physical terms. Accordingly, I ascribe myself material characteristics like height, weight, colour and my body is just like and part of the world among others, among beasts, plants, stones, etc. A body, including my body, has some shape and occupies some space excluding other bodies. It could be perceived by the senses and could be moved to occupy other spaces. It could be picked out, identified, labelled and described like any other material thing. There are, however, important differences between material bodies and living bodies and between plants and animals and more importantly for our purpose between animals and human beings. "Our attitude to what is alive and what is dead, is not the same. All our reactions are different. – If anyone says: 'That cannot simply come from the fact that the living move about in such-and-such a way and a dead one not', then I want to intimate to him that this is a case of the transition 'from quantity to quality'" (*PI* 284). This is a fundamental attitude.

Applied to human beings, 'having a body' is grammatically distinct from 'being a body' though we use both 'I have a body' and 'I am a body'. The distinctions with regard to the use of 'having' and 'being' with regard to 'body', 'soul', 'mind', 'will', etc., in relation to 'human being' are blurred. These expressions with 'having' are not anything like human beings owning something. I have two hands and they are part of my body;

but my body and mind are not part of anything. I do have a special relation to my body. It is uniquely mine, not just like having land or other properties. Human beings are not, however, identical with our bodies. Though I am bodily, I am not my body. "We can't substitute for 'I' a description of a body" (*BB* 74). It cannot be used without a body either. Even mental and spiritual properties are expressed in and through the body. Although a human body reacts to a great variety of stimuli, even when I am asleep or unconscious, it is not the bearer of the sensations, moods, thoughts, and so on. 'I' is not used here "because we recognize a particular person by his bodily characteristics" (*BB* 69), a feature particularly obvious in first-person experiential propositions. We don't say "Now I feel much better: the feeling in my facial muscles and round about the corners of my mouth is good" (*RPP* 454).[12] When I say, 'I feel much better' others understand me from the context and from the tone of my voice, expression in my face, and other fine shades of behaviour. "It is always presupposed that the person who smiles is human, and not just that what smiles is a human body" (*LW* 84). The smile is expressed on the face and we can have a smile only on a human face and we cannot separate the smile from the face (*LW* 3). We cannot separate the inner from the outer: "'I noticed that he was out of humour.' Is this a report about his behaviour or his state of mind? ('The sky looks threatening': is this about the present or the future?) Both; not side-by-side, however, but about the one via the other" (*PI* 179).

The body is the medium by which the presence of the soul is brought about. It is in and through our bodies that we are present to the world and to fellow human beings and relate to them and live in collaboration and conversation. It is to be remembered, not just as an empirical fact but also as a logical fact, that 'human being' does not mean the same as 'this body', although it "only has meaning with reference to a body" (*WL* 62). We cannot drive a wedge between the body that expresses an idea of human action, and the body that is the subject matter of the idea of action, because it is part of the sense of human action that utterer and subject should be one and the same.[13] Commenting on Fraser's report that Malays conceive the human soul as a homunculus corresponding exactly in shape, proportion, and colour to the body in which it resides, Wittgenstein wrote:

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[12] *RPP* = Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, eds., Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

[13] Kenny, *The Legacy of Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984, 87.

"How much more truth there is in this view which ascribes the same multiplicity to the soul as to the body, than in a modern watered down theory" (*PO* 141).[14] It is in this spirit we can understand his remark: "The human body is the best picture of the human soul" (*PI* 78). Human subjectivity is revealed in and through the human body; "not side-by-side, however, but about the one via the other" (*PI* 179).

A picture of body can correspond to an idea (*Vorstellung*) of soul. We cannot have pictures of soul. A picture of body can, however, correspond to a *Vorstellung* of a soul. We look at photographs and portraits and see human beings not just bodies. We see the expression of soul in a face and in the bodily posture. We see happy, sad, serious, or fearful persons, not just pictures of bodies. However, the picture itself is not soul nor does it stand equivalent to the word 'soul'. Words and pictures are used to represent imaginatively soul; they are not soul(s). An idea of soul is not a picture of a soul, nor a picture of a body, nor the word 'soul'. It is not replaceable in the language-game by anything that we should call a picture. The idea of soul certainly enters into the language-game in a sense; only not as a picture.[15] The word 'soul' cannot mean what it does by way of a picture qua picture: there cannot be a picture of soul; however, pictures can correspond to it. The idea of soul represents something for which there cannot be a picture; yet, we typically use pictures in our talk about soul. This is true also about what we say regarding 'mind', 'spirit', 'will', 'inner', etc., with necessary changes depending on the context. They are all pictured using pictures of body. 'Body' and 'soul' are, thus, used to speak about human beings. The expressions regarding body are interwoven with expressions regarding mind, soul, spirit, reason, will, etc. They do not stand for separate parts of the human person, but for the whole human being considered from different perspectives. All of them are interwoven to give a synoptic view of human beings.

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[14] *PO* = Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions*, Klagge, J. and A. Nordmann, eds., Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.

[15] "The image of pain is not a picture and this image is not replaceable in the language-game by anything that we should call a picture. – The image of pain certainly enters into the language-game in a sense; only not as a picture" (*PI* 300). The meaning would be clearer if *Vorstellung* is translated as idea or concept rather than image.

4. "The Human Being Is the Best Picture of the Human Soul" (*CV* 56)[16]

At a certain stage in his pervasive and persistent attempts in clarifying the concepts regarding the human subject, Wittgenstein made the following illuminating remark: "It comes to this: only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious" (*PI* 281). From an empirical point of view, it is merely a description, a common sense report. It is revealing, however, from a philosophical point of view; it puts an end to our struggles to decide between body and soul, matter and spirit as the essence of human being. The category of human being is drawn here as fundamental to our language-game; the basis of all our talk on human beings. Human being is what it is and is neither to be reduced to some other thing like body, mind, soul, spirit, reason, will, etc., though they are used in relation to the concept of 'human being', nor is it a compound of such entities. We do speak of body, soul, mind, will, reason, spirit, etc., but we should not forget at any stage that we are speaking about human body, human soul, human mind, etc., and that the subject is always a living human being. In fact, philosophy has nothing to do with metaphysical and ethical subjects if these concepts have nothing to do with living human beings.[17]

Human beings are neither bodies nor bodiless selves, but beings with distinctive psychophysical characteristics. Our use of "living human being," as Evans observed, "simply spans the gap between the mental and the physical, and is no more intimately connected with one aspect of our self-conception than the other."[18] It is primitive in the sense that it is not an 'abstraction' from or a 'fiction' constructed out of other basic concepts. It is not to be analysed in terms of body or soul nor as that of an animated body or of an embodied anima. A human being is no more a thinking substance than a bodily thing. He/she is a living creature that perceives its environment, and responds in various ways with its own goals and purposes. In their responses to the environment human beings are creative to such an extent that they make the given world, a human world. To conceive them simply as automatons is not intelligible (*PI* 420). A living human being is an embodied subject with active and passive bodily and spiritual (rational, emotional, volitional, etc.) powers and is substantially and creatively present in the world. We live, move and have our being in the world.

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[16] *CV* = Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, G. H. von Wright, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998.

[17] In his early philosophy, Wittgenstein discarded the study of 'human being' together with body and mind/soul to empirical sciences, declaring such studies have "nothing to do with philosophy" (*TLP* 6.53).

[18] Evans, G. *The Varieties of Reference*, J. McDowell, ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, 256.

A human being cannot be reduced to 'body', 'mind', 'soul', 'reason', 'will', or a combination of all these or some of them. I may be proud/ ashamed of myself without being proud or ashamed of my body or mind. I may hurt my foot, but it is I who suffer, not my foot. My foot may hurt, but it does not hurt itself; it hurts me and it is I who have hurt myself. I may be conscious of a sharp pain in my foot, but my head is neither conscious nor unconscious of it. "It is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain" (*Z* 540) and, "if someone has a pain in his hand, then the hand does not say so ... and one does not comfort the hand, but the sufferer: one looks into his face" (*PI* 286). It is human beings, not their bodily organs like eyes, ears, hearts, and brains that behave. A person sees with his eyes, and listens with his ears but eyes do not see nor do the ears hear. It is not like writing with a pen. Hearts beat and pump blood, but they do not fall in or out of love; it is human beings who love and take care. Emotions are exhibited in human face, tone of voice, bodily responses, and in other fine shades of behaviour. It is the human being who expresses thoughts, opinions, and beliefs in utterances and manifests them in deeds. Therefore, "instead of 'attitude toward the soul' one could also say 'attitude toward a human'" (*LW* 38).

5. Conclusion

What we learn from these investigations is that the concept of human being is to be treated as something fundamental. It can neither be reduced to bodily or mental characteristics nor be seen as a product of body and something else (mind, soul, spirit, etc., or a compound of all these). Human being is a fundamental concept. There are no metaphysical definitions for human being and our inability to produce definitions or sufficient and necessary conditions or criteria for human subject is not ignorance. Nor is it the result of the depth or mystery of the topic; it is just a matter of the primitiveness and irreducibility of the concept of a "living human being."[19] We agree in our judgements regarding human beings and our attitude to human beings is different from our attitudes to other objects, living and non-living.[20]

In all the sketches on self, person, I, body, mind, soul, will, consciousness, etc., we are to take into account the concept of living human being as fundamental. It is only in relation to such terms that human subjectivity can be expressed. Also those terms have their currency only in relation to 'human beings'. We can rightly use 'body', 'mind', 'soul', 'will', 'reason', etc., with regard to human beings. We note the similarities and differences in the use of these words and understand their meanings in their contexts. "What goes on within also has meaning only in the stream of life" (*LW* 30). Care is taken, however, not to reduce human subjectivity into any one or a definite grouping of them. We also look and see how these words and other related expressions are interwoven to give the fabric of human subjectivity. As Wittgenstein observed, "... one pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others" (*Z* 569) and one has to see them in the context of the "weave of our life" (*PI* 174).

The identity and continuity through time of a 'living human being' is intelligible in the context of human life, and it is just that continuity which allows us to talk about human beings, rather than just about points of views, scattered thoughts and random sequences of experiences. "Prima facie, such continuity does not need anything underlying it of a mysterious and indefinable nature, any more than the continuity of a physical object needs to be thus supported."[21] A living human being is not just a bundle of perceptions or a collection of points of views or a host of relations. He/she is living, dynamic and creative, and at the same time subject to bounds and bonds. "All the peculiarities we have noticed about 'I'-thoughts are consistent with and, indeed, at points encourage, the idea that there is a living human being which those thoughts concern."[22] The human being is, indeed, the best picture of human subjectivity (*RPP* I, 281). If someone insists on asking 'What is self?' we can simply answer, 'a living human being'.

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[19] McGinn, *The Character of Mind*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, 146.

[20] There are occasions when we raise questions whether something or someone is a living human being. For example, our attitudes and opinions regarding human embryos vary. It is a moral problem whether to treat them as babies or foetus. We discuss and debate questions such as 'when do embryos become babies' and 'what makes them living human beings'.

[21] Madell, *The Identity of the Self*, Edinburgh: The University Press, 1981, 10.

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[22] Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, 256.

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THE ONTOLOGICAL CAUSATION

Babu Thaliath[◆]

1. Mind-Body Problem

The current debate on mind-brain reductionism brings about the resurgence – or Renaissance – of Cartesianism. This problem, which can in essence be subsumed not just under philosophy or psychology, but primarily under neurosciences, proves historically to be the culmination of mind-body dualism introduced by René Descartes in the modern philosophical discourse in the 17th century. Descartes' method to differentiate the mind, defined as a purely thinking and non extended substance (*res cogitans*), from the material and extended body (*res extensa*) is clearly an ontological attempt which became well-established in the history of Modern Philosophy as *substance-ontological-dualism*. The Cartesian dualism, postulated and substantiated in *Meditations*, is based on an epistemological differentiation between the recognizability of mind from that of body, as distinctively expressed in the method of doubt or negation (of all mental perceptions and attributes of bodies). If the mind can be separately identified as opposite to the body, this cognition rests eventually upon the irreducible ontic difference between mind and body.

However, this epistemological differentiation does not refer to a spatial and temporal separation between mind and body, but implies a perfect distinction between these fundamental modes of existence. In short, we perceive the nature of the existence of mind completely different from the nature of bodily existence, since there exists an irreducible difference between the mode of being of the mind and that of the body. If *Meditations* attempts a perfect (epistemological and ontological) distinction between mind and body, it relates – in the Cartesian system – invariably to certain characteristic traits of these most fundamental modes of being (or existence). The primary and irreducible trait or attribute of the

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body is pure extension; it is a *res extensa*, i.e., an extended substance, against which the mind is neither extended nor material. The mind, which is perfectly distinct from the body, is, therefore, a non extended and immaterial substance – a *res cogitans*.

The Cartesian distinction between body and mind met with a few significant polemics in the 17th century. If the mind has – as compared to the body – neither materiality nor extension, how can a union between mind and body, as revealed particularly in bodily volition, be materialized? Two of the prominent Cartesians who posed this question in their correspondence with Descartes were the Philosopher Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655) and the Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, daughter of King Friedrich V of Bohemia and Queen Elisabeth, a born Stuart. Descartes seemed to ignore Gassendi's objection, but took the polemic of the princess into consideration:

> In October 1642 Descartes had learnt that Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, in exile at the Hague, had read his *Meditations* with enthusiasm. He offered to visit her to explain any difficulties she encountered; but she put her questions in writing in a letter of 6 May 1643. 'How can the soul of man', she asked, 'being only a thinking substance, determine his bodily spirits to perform voluntary actions?' Descartes' reply began a correspondence which lasted until his death.[1]

Princess' polemic relates clearly to a definite function of the mind, namely, the causation of volition as represented in the form of bodily movements; it equally relates to another function of the mind, namely, the sensory perceptions in which mental states are caused by bodily, i.e., physiological processes. Descartes recognizes how both these functions necessitate the union between mind and body. In his answer to Princess, Descartes differentiates the mental operation of thinking from that of sensation and volition where there is a clear union or nexus between mind and body, indicating thereby the existence of two distinct spheres of mind:

> There are two facts about the human soul on which depend all the things we can know of its nature. The first is that it thinks; the second is that it is united to the body and can act and be acted upon along with it. About the second I have said hardly anything; I have tried only to make the first well understood. For, my principal aim was to

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[1] René Descartes, *Philosophical Letters*, ed. Anthony Kenny, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 136.

> prove the distinction between soul and body and, to this end, only the first was useful, and the second might have been harmful. But because your Highness' vision is so clear that nothing can be concealed from her, I will try now to explain how I conceive the union of the soul and the body and how the soul has the power to move the body.[2]

2. The Causal Phenomena

The union between mind and body, which characterizes the spheres or domains of sensory perceptions and volition, is principally – how we could derive from the polemics of Princess Elisabeth – a *causal* union. If in sensory perceptions the body forms the domain of causes and the mind the domain of effects, in volition this order of causation is reversed.

How can this causal union or nexus between body and mind be differentiated from a normal causal nexus which we could easily identify in various disciplines of science, namely, Mechanics, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, etc.? We conceive the process of causation primarily as a temporal succession of causes and effects which altogether form natural phenomena. The principle of causality states that an effect necessarily follows a cause. In other words, every effect in nature can be traced back to a cause – or to a causal phenomenon. The entire etiological diagnostics in the field of physiological sciences are based on a causal principle, that every physiological symptom of a decease as effect can be traced back to a physiological or mere physical cause. The weather forecasts are concluded from empirically given *causal* phenomena in nature; from an empirically identified local or regional difference in atmospheric pressure, we are able to conclude that it will result into a hefty wind and eventually to a rain.

In all these day to day phenomena, we could identify the elementary principle of causality. We are able to recognize without much difficulty, that the causation in these and similar natural phenomena constitutes a *sufficient* causation. A fundamental reason for the simplicity and sufficiency of these causal phenomena in the nature seems to be a domain of specific conformity between the spheres of effect and cause, as a result of which the causal processes take place within the context of a scientific discipline. The movements of billiard balls on a billiard board and their collisions are purely mechanical phenomena of causes and effects, i.e., they, as natural phenomena, can be identified within the context of classical Newtonian Mechanics alone. In the same way, the pathological effects and causes belong to the scientific domain of Physiology whose object of study is restricted to the organic body. All these forms of causal nexus evolve within the physical world; they can be subsumed under the *world of material objects*. But the causal processes like the bodily causation of mental states and operations and the mental causation of bodily volition show an *ontological* difference – rather than an ontological conformity – between the domains of causes and effects. The "leap" from bodily causation to mental effects, i.e., to mental states and operations, is so enormous and distinct, that a causal nexus between these completely different domains of cause and effect appears to us a puzzle.

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[2] Descartes, *Philosophical Letters*, 137-138.

We are confronted with the problem of mental causation of volition and bodily causation of mental states and operations, when we reduce these phenomena to their causes. In the above mentioned mechanical phenomena, the effects seem to be perfectly reduced to their causes, forming, thus, a *sufficient* causal reduction. In other words, in these and similar cases of a causal nexus (between effects and their causes) a *sufficient causality* is latent. A sufficient causal reduction of this nature cannot be ascribed to the mental causation of volition and the bodily causation of mental states and operations, because the sufficient or perfect causal reduction presupposes the ontological conformity between the domains of effects and causes. But there exists between mind and body an irresolvable ontic difference, i.e., a difference in their mode of being. In short, the nature of the reality of the mind is not identical with the nature of the reality of the body; they form absolutely different modes of existence.

3. The Ontological Causation

How can a mental reality be effectuated from a physical and material reality which has a clear ontic difference to it? This question is equally relevant to the mental causation of bodily volition. When we integrate the *leap* from bodily processes to mental states and operations in a causal nexus, this causal reduction implies – and is based on – a different mode of causality. The principle of causality states a necessary succession of causes and effects, all of which are temporal events or processes. The causal process is, therefore, a momentary phenomenon that connects similar momentary events of causes and effects. When the causation as an event ceases, it ceases also the event of its effect (or effectuation). As mere events, the causal processes and their effects in body and mind are subject to this general principle of causality. The bodily causation of a mental state such as pain implies a causal nexus (or connectivity) between two different momentary events – in the domains of cause and effects. The mental causation of bodily volition can be similarly observed as a causal nexus between two momentary events of cause and effect. When the causal processes in these twofold causal nexus end or cease to exist, there occurs a cessation of their effects, namely the mental and bodily states and processes.

When the irresolvable ontic difference between the mind and the body becomes a premise in various causal nexus between these two fundamental modes of existence, it presupposes and legitimizes a different form of causality. The ontic difference between the mind and the body, which makes a *sufficient* causal connectivity between these two absolute different modes of existence impossible, results, however, from a causal principle itself. As a mode of reality, the mind, i.e., the mental states and operations, is invariably caused by the neuronal processes in body. On the other hand, the mind *causes* reality of volition, i.e., bodily states and processes. In both these cases a form of being or existence evolves from a domain of reality which is fundamentally different from it. The mental phenomena are caused *ontologically* through bodily, i.e., neuronal phenomena and vice versa. Causation of this nature can, therefore, be called an *ontological causation* which, as a principle, underlies every causal nexus between the body and the mind.

In the current discourse on brain-mind-identity which rehabilitates or historically reconstructs the old mind-body-problem, we could identify tendencies of causal-ontological reduction of mental states and processes to brain states, i.e., to different neuronal processes and structures. The identity theory (U. T. Place, J. J. C. Smart and others) states that mental phenomena *are nothing but* certain neuronal phenomena (which causes them) in brain and in central nervous system; they are *identical* with them. Mental states and operations *are* basically cerebral phenomena as observed and analyzed in the science of Neurobiology. Peter Bieri, one of the major proponents of Analytical Philosophy of Mind in Germany, emphasizes with regard to the identity theory the ontological identity between mental and neurophysiologic states and operations. Such an identity, however, implies a perfect causal-ontological reduction of mental states to brain states. The effectuation of mental states and operations is fully ascribed to a neurophysiologic phenomenality. Consequently, the mental causation of neurophysiologic states and processes can exist only in the form of physical – i.e., again neurophysiologic – phenomena. Thus, the identity theory presupposes a causal closure of physical, i.e., bodily phenomena.

The Neurophysiology dominates the current discourse on the neuronal base of free will, especially in German academic circles; it clearly argues for the primacy of brain states and processes over the mental phenomena. The main proponents of this position are Wolf Singer, Gerhard Roth, and Wolfgang Prinz.[3] All of them identify the mental causation as the foundation of free will, but reduce it to neuronal states and processes, i.e., to a neuronal causation within the context of Neurophysiology or Experimental Psychology. Accordingly, it is the brain alone and not 'I', i.e., my free will, which takes a decision. The self-conscious subject, upon which the entire tradition of the philosophy of free will and all the ethical and political values and notions of societies are built, will then prove to be a mere construction or rather a mythos:

> *Mir scheint der Satz »Nicht das Ich, sondern das Gehirn hat entschieden!« korrekt zu sein, denn »eine Entscheidung treffen« ist ein Vorgang, dessen Auftreten objektiv überprüfbar ist. Auf den linken oder rechten Knopf zu drücken oder (tatsächlich oder virtuell) durch eine linke oder rechte Tür zu gehen ist (oder benötigt) eine Entscheidung, und man kann mit entsprechendem Aufwand experimentell untersuchen, was im Gehirn passiert, bevor und wenn diese Entscheidung getroffen wird. Falls es nun stimmt, daß es nicht das wollende und bewußt erlebende Ich ist, welches die Entscheidung über eine Handlung trifft, wer entscheidet dann tatsächlich?*[4]

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[3] Wolf Singer is Professor of Neurophysiology and Director of the Max Planck Institute for Brain Studies in Frankfurt am Main. Gerhard Roth is Professor of Behavioural Psychology at the University of Bremen. Wolfgang Prinz is Professor of Psychology and Director of Max Planck Institute for Cognitive and Neurosciences in Munich.

[4] "I think the statement, 'Not I, but my brain has decided', to be correct, because 'taking a decision' is a process whose occurrence is objectively verifiable. Whether to press the left or right button or whether (really or virtually) to go through the door at left or right is (or necessitates) a decision. And we can with the corresponding experimental effort examine what happens in brain before and when the decision is taken. If it is true that it is not the willing and consciously experiencing 'I' who takes the decision about an action, then who decides really?" (Author's translation). Gerhard Roth, "Worüber dürfen Hirnforscher reden – und in welcher Weise?" in *Hirnforschung und Willensfreiheit*, Frankfurt am Main:

The experimental base of these and similar arguments, which establish a *causal* primacy of brain over consciousness with regard to the free will, was the famous neurophysiologic experiment of Benjamin Libet (in the 1970s). The Libetian experiment was originally based on an assumption that the measurable brain waves as causes *temporally* coincide with the bodily effects, i.e., the external behaviour of the test persons. This causal function of the brain and the nervous system is called the *readiness potential*. Through an experiment Libet could demonstrate that it is the readiness potential that is produced first before the test person takes a decision to act physically (in Libet's experiment, pressing a button). In other words, between the development of readiness potential and its effect, namely, the free and conscious decision, a slight time-lag was observed. From this experiment the scientists of Neurophysiology tend to conclude that our free will, which we directly experience or of which we are immediately conscious, is a mere construction of our brain (since the volition always follows the development of readiness potential in a time-lag).

This position, namely, the *causal* primacy of neurobiological processes over mental states and operations, is held in Anglo-American tradition amongst others by the Philosopher John Searle. Searle denotes his philosophy of mind as *biological naturalism*. In his Reith Lectures (held in 1984 with the title, *Minds, Brains and Science*), Searle defends his basic notion of the causal primacy of brain processes which alone accomplish the various mental phenomena. "Mental phenomena, all mental phenomena whether conscious or unconscious, visual or auditory, pains, tickles, itches, thoughts, indeed, all of our mental life, are caused by processes going on in the brain"[5] According to Searle, this causal reduction should resolve the Cartesian mind-body-dualism once and for all. I would argue, however, that this causal reduction is not a proposition which *sufficiently* resolves the problem of mind-body-dualism, i.e., how it was introduced in the modern philosophical discourse by Descartes and represented by many other philosophers in the post-Cartesian era. Descartes conceived the fundamental difference between the mind and the body in the form of an ontic difference between two absolutely different modes of being or existence. A mere causal reduction of mental states to

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Suhrkamp, 2004, 77.

[5] John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science* (The 1984 Reith Lectures), London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1984, 18.

brain states would not be sufficient to overcome the ontic difference between these domains of effect and cause; moreover, an ontological reduction has to be postulated as the underlying principle of the theory of identity between mind and body. Therefore, in Searle's thesis, the mind is reduced to a *feature of brain* – in the same manner how the properties like solidity of ice, fluidity of water or the gaseousness of steam form different features of one and the same substance, namely water (H_2O): "Pains and other mental phenomena just are features of the brain (and perhaps the rest of the central nervous system)."[6]

Based on this thesis, Searle explains how the material phenomenon of effect – as a state of reality – in certain cases can be observed as features of an elementary and substantial domain of cause:

> A common distinction in physics is between micro- and macro-properties of systems – the small and large scales. Consider, for example, the desk at which I am now sitting, or the glass of water in front of me. Each object is composed of micro-particles. The micro-particles have features at the level of molecules and atoms as well as at the deeper level of subatomic particles. But each object also has certain properties such as the solidity of the table, the liquidity of the water, and the transparency of the glass, which are surface or global features of the physical systems. Many such surface or global properties can be causally explained by the behaviour of elements at the micro-level. For example, the solidity of the table in front of me is explained by the lattice structure occupied by the molecules of which the table is composed. Similarly, the liquidity of the water is explained by the nature of the interactions between the H_2O molecules. Those macro-features are causally explained by the behaviour of elements at the micro-level.
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> I want to suggest that this provides a perfectly ordinary model for explaining the puzzling relationships between the mind and the brain. In the case of liquidity, solidity, and transparency, we have no difficulty at all in supposing that the surface features are *caused by* the behaviour of elements at the micro-level, and at the same time we accept that the surface phenomena *just are* features of the very system in question. I think the clearest way of stating this point is to say that the surface feature is both *caused by* the behaviour of micro-elements, and at the same time is *realized in* the system that is made

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[6] Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science*, 19.

> up of the micro-elements. There is a cause and effect relationship, but at the same time the surface features are just higher level features of the very system whose behaviour at the micro-level causes those features.[7]

Searle shows in the above cited examples how the surface features at macro level of a phenomenon can be caused by elements and their structures at micro level. Through these examples Searle attempts an analogy between the causation of the surface features solidity, fluidity or gaseousness through various molecular structures at a micro-level and the causation of mind through brain (which is at a micro-level). When Searle – in analogy to the material states of solidity or fluidity – identifies the mental states as surface features of brain, it implies clearly a causal and ontological reduction. Such a (causal-ontological) reduction forms the essential feature of an analytical method in which the *reality* of a complex and composite phenomenon is traced back to the causality of elementary substances or phenomena and their structures. But when we reverse the order of these and similar cases of causal nexus, we will reach at a rather synthetic process in which elementary substances and their structures *ontologically cause* higher, i.e., more complex phenomenal and mental realities. The manner in which the solidity of ice is caused by the lattice structure of water molecules, or the mental states and operations is caused by neuronal states and processes, forming various instances of an *ontological causation.*

The processes in brain which cause mental states and operations are not only physiological, i.e., neuronal, but also electromagnetic and chemical. The synapse which connects the neurons contains a messenger which functions as electro transmitter. Therefore, the causation of mental states and operations through these processes cannot be subsumed merely under a *unique* neuronal causation. Various physical processes, which form an integral part of neuronal causation, are to be taken into account. These processes belong to different domains of physical phenomenality. The electrical processes in brain and in central nervous system can be functionally or mere operationally subject to the science of Neurobiology, but it differentiates itself in its *ontic status* from neurons which are organic and form, as such, most of the brain cells. While neurons – as organic cells – belong to the scientific domain of Biology, the chemical and electro-chemical phenomena in brain and in central nervous system are subject to the domain of other *inorganic* domains of Chemistry and Physics, i.e., Electro-mechanics. The chemical reactions in brain consist of molecular and atomic processes; electrons, which are subatomic particles, form the base of electrical processes. In this way, we could identify in neuronal causation of mental states and operations an *ontic progression* from an elementary physical phenomenality, as represented by the subatomic particles, atomic elements, molecular (inorganic and organic) compounds, biological and cellular neurons, etc., which altogether form the constituents of neuronal processes.

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[7] Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science*, 20-21.

We have defined the neurobiological causation of mental states and operations as an ontological causation, in which the reality of a higher or more complex mode of being evolves from the causation of elementary modes of being. However, we could identify in the entire *ontic structure* of phenomenal reality different forms and structures of analogous ontological causation. The subatomic particles, namely electrons, protons and neutrons, cause ontologically the being or existence of atomic elements, e.g., Hydrogen, Oxygen, Carbon or Mercury. At a higher level the atomic elements cause – in different molecular structures – the inorganic and organic compounds, e.g., Water (H_2O), Carbon dioxide (CO_2), Methane (CH_4), etc. The ontological causation of molecular (organic and inorganic) compounds underlies the existence of biological phenomena, e.g., the *cellular* DNA, Proteins, Neurons, etc. The neurobiological causation of mental states and operations consists of a chain of ontological causations which are latent in the ontic (phenomenal) structure of reality.

4. Ontological Causation as Substantial and Structural Causation

Now, we examine how the ontological causation is different from our common notion of causality, conceived as a necessary temporal succession of events of causes and effects. Which are the fundamental features that demarcate the ontological causation from the normal momentary causal processes in nature? Within the domain of physical phenomena the ontological causation of elementary and *substantial* modes of being forms in principle a substantial causation from which the reality or existence of a more complex substance evolves. Therefore, the primary feature of the ontological causation is that it is a substantial causation. Electrons, protons and neutrons are elementary substances which altogether cause ontologically the material substantiality of atomic chemical elements. At a higher level, these atomic elements (H, O, N, C, etc.) cause – in different molecular structures – a great diversity of inorganic and organic compounds of which our physical reality is composed. New compounds are produced in a chemical reaction between two or more inorganic compounds; this process is nothing but a causal-substantial restructuring of the atomic elements which are underlying the compounds, for example, $H_2SO_4 + CaCO_3 \rightarrow CaSO_4 + H_2O + CO_2$.

Just as the substantial causation of atomic elements underlies the original compounds, the resulting new compounds evolve from an analogous ontological, i.e., substantial causation of the same atomic elements. A great diversity of organic compounds, which form the basic components of the biological phenomena, evolves from a few inorganic and atomic elements, namely Hydrogen, Oxygen, Carbon, Nitrogen, etc. In other words, the ontological-substantial causation of a few atomic elements underlies the reality or existence of all the organic compounds. In an ontic structure of reality, we could identify such ontological-substantial causation up to the neuronal causation of mental states and operations. The brain and the central nervous system which is connected to it have essentially a material-substantial phenomenality. That they cause – in different neuronal structures and processes – the immaterial, i.e., non-substantial mental states and operations, can be effectively conceived within the parameters of an ontological-substantial causation (which, as effectuation of irreducible mental states, forms a limiting mode of ontological causation in the ontic structure of reality).

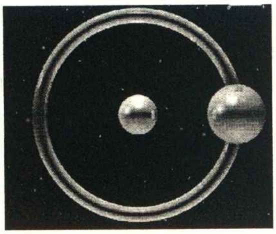

Figure 1

The ontological causation has in addition to the substantial a structural base. The elementary modes of being cause the reality of a more complex mode of being or existence not only substantially, but also structurally. The chemical elements evolve from different atomic structures of subatomic particles (electron, proton and neutron). Figure 1 shows the structure of an atom of the chemical element Hydrogen. It consists of an electron and a nucleus with only one proton. Considering the electrons which rotate in an orbit around a nucleus, this and similar structures of atomic elements can be described as dynamic structures. In this way, different atomic elements evolve *ontologically* from a substantial as well as from a structural base of elementary subatomic particles, i.e., the existence or reality of atomic elements is *substantially and structurally caused* by the subatomic particles – electrons, protons and neutrons – which form in this ontological causation the elementary modes of being. Thus, the ontological causation (which underlies the existence of every mode of reality) includes both substantial and structural causation of elementary modes of being. The same elementary substances, i.e., the subatomic particles in different quantities and structural forms *cause* ontologically a great diversity of atomic elements; this plainly explains how within the overall phenomenon of ontological causation a substantial causation correlates with a structural causation.

The structural causation can be identified at all the levels of the ontic structure of physical or phenomenal reality. The atoms of chemical elements combine in different molecular structures resulting in inorganic and organic compounds. The molecular-structural causation is clearly established in various organic compounds. Few inorganic elements, namely, Hydrogen, Carbon, Oxygen, Nitrogen, or Phosphorous, are combined in molecular structures which bring about most of the organic compounds. The carbohydrates have more or less the same substantial base, namely, the inorganic elements Hydrogen, Carbon and Oxygen, but they are different from one another with respect to their molecular structures. A simple organic compound like Methane has its molecular structure with four atoms of Hydrogen and a single atom of Carbon. However, a molecule of Methane evolves not just from a substantial base, but clearly from a definite spatial structure as shown in Figure 2.

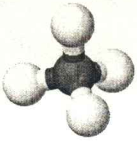

Figure 2

The existence of a Methane molecule is here materialized through a structural causation of elementary inorganic atoms of Hydrogen and Carbon. The phenomenon of isomers shows how different organic compounds with identical substantial base (of a few inorganic elements) evolve solely from different molecular structures. Isomers are organic compounds consisting identical chemical elements in different molecular structures. Hence, they form the best examples for structural causation which, along with substantial causation, constitute the ontological causation.[8] Beyond this domain of organic compounds – at the highest level in the ontic structure of reality – we see how the neuronal structures cause different mental states and operations. Neurons are biological cells which are composed mostly of organic compounds. Here we could observe how different mental states and operations emerge from different structures of *substantially* identical neurons.

In all the above discussed cases of ontological causation, a substantial causation correlates with a structural causation, in consequence of which a higher and more complex mode of being or existence is ontologically caused by elementary modes of being. Ontological causation of this nature (where there is a clear correlation between a substantial and structural causation) will, thus, always result into an escalation or rise of the mode of being or existence from the domain of cause to that of effect. However, such an *ontological* escalation of the mode of being seems to be determined predominantly through a substantial causation. In certain cases of mechanical phenomena, the ontological causation consists solely of a structural causation. The different physical states of a material body, namely, the solidity, fluidity and gaseousness, as well as certain material properties like transparency are ontologically caused through various molecular structures alone. The solid ice, the liquid water and the gaseous steam *are* substantially identical – i.e., all these physical states consist of identical water molecules – but they differ in their molecular structure. Here we can not trace the ontological status of different physical states to a substantial causation, since the domain of cause and the domain of effect are *substantially* identical. The physical states of solidity, fluidity and gaseousness and the material properties like transparency are solely caused by different molecular structures of the same material. In short, certain

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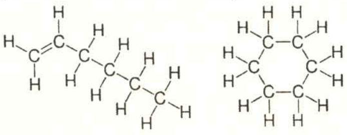
[8] Following figure (Figure 3) shows the structures of the isomers Cyclohexane (C_6H_{12}) and 1- Hexane (C_6H_{12}).



physical states and material properties result from a structural causation which does not necessitate a correlation with a substantial causation.

Water molecules are mere components of ice, water and steam; they do not form *elementary substances* which ontologically, i.e., *substantially*, cause these physical states of one and the same material. A structural causation alone forms here the ontological causation, since there is no *ontological-substantial difference* between the domains of cause and effect. In other words, since there is no rise or escalation of the mode of being, which is to be caused ontologically through elementary modes of being, the structural causation occurs here within the context of a scientific discipline, namely the Mechanics. This *mechanical*-structural causation forms the basis of *Strength of Materials*, an important discipline of Engineering Mechanics. The sheer resistance of a footing made of steel or of reinforced cement concrete, the tensile strength a steel rope, density of a metal or viscosity of a fluid, bending moment of a beam, etc., are *mechanical* properties which can be *causally* traced back to different molecular structures of the material, or which are caused by *substantially identical* molecular structures alone.

5. Ontological Causation as Constant Causation

We have discussed the ordinary notion of causality in many of our day to day situations, which can be observed as a temporal succession of causes and effects. The causes and events in such causal nexus form momentary events. The causal events lead to effects, as long as they last or persist. However, certain effects in the form of physical states such as wetness on the surface of a road which persists even if the cause, say the rain, ceases. The dryness of the road surface and the leaves of trees are then caused by the sunshine and atmospheric evaporation. All of these causal processes are momentary events which are characterized by a temporal succession and finality of causes and effects. In contrast to it the ontological causation constitutes a *constant causation.* Within the context of ontological causation a constant (ontological) causation of elementary modes of being underlies every mode of existence as represented in an ontic structure of reality. Both the substantial and the structural causation form, in this manner, a constant ontological causation. If the elementary subatomic particles – electrons, protons and neutrons – ontologically cause the existence and reality of an atom, this casual nexus is characterized through a constant causation, i.e., a *constant coexistence* of reality and causality in the material existence of an atom. Similarly, the constant ontological causation of inorganic elements is latent in the material existence and reality of organic compounds. The above discussed mechanical-structural causation of molecules, which brings about the physical states and properties like solidity, fluidity, gaseousness, transparency, etc., also refers to a form of constant ontological-structural causation which safeguard the existential constancy of these physical states.

Now a decisive question can be asked: Can we denote the nexus between the mental reality and its bodily-neuronal causality in terms of a constant causation? In other words, is consciousness a *constant* mental reality in which an equally constant neuronal causality is immanent? Before answering this question we will try to discuss some of the essential characteristics of the phenomenon of constant causation. In case of momentary causal connections we experience in our day to day life, the effects are seemingly brought about through *sufficient* causal events. That is to say, the effects can be perfectly reduced to causal events. The wetness of roads or leaves is *sufficiently* caused by the rainfall. (Apart from the fact that the subjective experience of wetness evolves from the bodily causation of mental states). The movements of billiard balls on a billiard board (a classical example of causal nexus which is referred quite often) follow the principles of Classical Mechanics which is based on axiomatic propositions of *sufficient* causal nexus (of mechanical causes and effects). Already the first principles of classical Newtonian Mechanics imply a causal adequacy of certain fundamental natural phenomena. The law of inertia implies an adequate or sufficient causal nexus between an effect, namely, the linear and uniform movement of a body in free space, and a causal mechanical principle, namely the inertial tendency of a body to continue its movement linearly and uniformly. Similarly, a sufficient causal nexus between effect and cause underlies the law of action and reaction.

In all these examples of mechanical phenomena the effects and their causes occur within the context of the Science of Mechanics. That is to say, a contextual conformity can be identified between the domains of effect and cause. This also implies that in mechanical causations the domains of effect and cause can be subsumed under a unitary scientific *domain of being*. Similar contextual, i.e., ontological conformity between the domains of effect and cause can be observed in other scientific disciplines like Chemistry, Physics, Physiology, Geology, etc. The adequacy of causal nexus within the contextuality of these *etiological* sciences is, therefore, based on a principle or a prerequisite which states that the effects and their causes occur in a unitary scientific domain of being (or, in other words, there exists an ontological-contextual conformity between the domains of causes and effects).

Such an ontological (or ontological-contextual) conformity between the domains of effects and causes cannot be found in cases of ontological constant causations. The ontological causation – in the form of substantial and structural causation – brings about a rise or escalation of the mode of being or reality between causes and effects. As compared to the atomic chemical elements the subatomic particles – which cause them ontologically, i.e., substantially and structurally – have an entirely different mode of being or reality.[9] The rise or escalation of the mode of being in the ontological causation can be identified most clearly and distinctively when neurons cause the mental states and operations which are completely different in their ontological status from the physical phenomena (to which the neuronal causation belongs). In these and similar cases of ontological causal nexus, in which a higher and more complex mode of being or reality is constantly caused by elementary modes of being, a clear *ontic difference* between the reality and its (ontological) causality is to be observed. From the subatomic particles up to the evolution of consciousness, the ontic structure of reality is characterized – at its different levels – always by a constant coexistence of causal and elementary modes of being and their effectuation of the reality of higher and more complex modes being, between which an irreducible ontic difference exists.

6. The Sufficient and Insufficient (Ontological) Causation

Another equally important feature of the ontological causation is that it forms in most of the cases an insufficient causation. The ontological causation connects in a causal nexus two different domains of being between which mostly a rise or escalation of the mode of being – from causal to effectuated states – is to be observed. This rise in the mode or status of being implies a clear ontic inconformity between the domains of cause and effect (or between ontological causality and reality), because of which the causation seems to be insufficient or inadequate. The subatomic particles, electrons, protons and neutrons, cause ontologically the existence of various atomic chemical elements. But these elements, e.g., hydrogen, carbon, mercury, etc., *are* not mere combinations of the subatomic particles in different atomic structures. Similarly, the inorganic and organic compounds cannot be ontologically reduced to atomic elements which constitute them in different molecular structures. The insufficient ontological causation can be most distinctively identified in neuronal causation of mental states and operations, since at this level of the ontic structure of reality two absolutely different domains of being, namely, the purely mental and purely physical phenomena, are connected in an ontological causal nexus.

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[9] The mode of being or reality can also be denoted as mode of existence of physical phenomena or mental states and operations. Accordingly, the ontological causation forms invariably an existential causation.

Compared to this and similar insufficient ontological-substantial causations, the ontological-structural causation of physical states and qualities, e.g., solidity, fluidity, gaseousness, transparency as well as the properties like the tensile strength or sheer force of steel structures (as discussed above), implies a sufficient ontological causation. In these cases there exists an ontic conformity between the reality (of physical states) and the constant ontological causality which is latent in it. Since there is no ontic difference between the domains of cause and effect, the reality of these physical states and its qualities can be perfectly reduced to the ontological, i.e., structural and substantial causation of the molecules. We could, therefore, rightly state that the solid ice and the gaseous steam *are nothing but* water. But such an ontological-causal reduction would not be possible if we, thereby, cross the limits of the mode of being which characterizes the physical reality of material. We cannot – in an analogous manner – declare that water *is nothing but* H_2O, a mere structural combination of two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen, because the *reality* of the substance water has almost nothing common with the reality of its elementary-atomic components. Similarly, we cannot simply state that an atom of Hydrogen *is nothing but* a mere structural combination of an electron revolving around a nucleus consisting of one proton, or the numerous organic compounds *are nothing but* different molecular-structural combinations of a few inorganic elements, namely, Hydrogen, Carbon, Oxygen, Nitrogen, Phosphorous, etc.

The insufficient ontological causation is, therefore, most precisely determined through the absence of an ontic conformity between the domains of cause and effect. In other word, the insufficient ontological causation presupposes an irreducible ontic difference between the reality and its ontological causality. When we reduce the solidity of a body to a definite substantial and unitary molecular structure, we declare the reality of this physical state to be perfectly dependent on an ontological-structural causality which constantly underlies the state of solidity. However, most of the manifestations of ontological causation in nature do not presuppose such a perfect ontological-causal dependency of reality on an elementary and constant causality. The reality of water (H_2O) is only *to some extent* ontologically dependent on the reality of its atomic constituents, Hydrogen and Oxygen. That is to say, the reality of this molecular substance is to some extent *independent* of the ontological causality of its atomic constituents. Similarly, the reality of numerous organic compounds is to some degree independent of the ontological causality of its atomic constituents. This ontological-causal independence of the reality can be most clearly and distinctively identified in the neuronal causation of mental states and operations. The reality of sensory perceptions, imagination, or verbal thinking seems to be remarkably independent of the reality of the neurons which cause them ontologically. Therefore, the statement, 'mental states and operations are *nothing but* neuronal states and processes', proves to be highly inconsistent. This principle of *ontological-causal independence* imparts every (physical and mental) mode of reality its autonomy, to be more precise, an existential autonomy from the ontological causation of elementary modes of being which underlies it constantly.

As a result of the insufficient ontological causation or the ontological-causal independence, every mode of being in the ontic structure of reality appears to attain a distinctively autonomous reality – a *reality in itself*. This autonomy of a mode of being or reality is essentially supplemented with its uniqueness and finality. According to this principle, every mode of being – subatomic particles, atomic elements, molecular (inorganic and organic) compounds, biological cells, etc., forms an autonomous reality in itself. They are unique, because they remain unchanged or retain their mode of reality in all the atomic, molecular or biological structures. The same or identical subatomic particles constitute all the atomic elements. Similarly, the few identical inorganic elements (H, O, C, N, etc.) constitute a great variety of organic compounds. The modes of being or reality are also final states, because the existence of every mode of being indicates an intangible limit of phenomenality; every mode of being is a final state or form of existence *in itself*.

The autonomy, uniqueness, and finality form, therefore, the fundamental characteristics of every mode of being in the ontic structure of reality. These characteristics remain intact both in the reality of every mode of being and in the (ontological) causality of the elementary modes of being. They are based, on the one hand, on the insufficient ontological-substantial causality and, on the other, on the irreducible ontic difference between the domains of cause and effect (which underlies the insufficient ontological causality). The greater the ontic difference between the domains of cause and effect in the ontological causation becomes, the more clear and distinct appear these features of a mode of being. The existence and qualities of chemical (atomic) elements have attained a unique, autonomous and final state of *reality in itself* which cannot be ontologically reduced to the existence and qualities of the subatomic particles. Similarly, the reality of organic compounds differentiates itself distinctively from the reality of the inorganic atomic elements which constitute them. Every mode of being attains, as shown in these and similar cases, an unknown fact of *reality in itself* which cannot be reduced to the ontological causation of elementary modes of being. However, all these modes of being can be subsumed under a general category of physical phenomena. But when the mental states and operations are ontologically caused by neuronal structures and processes, we could identify a perfect *ontic transition* from the mode of being in the domain of cause and in the domain of effect. Such an ontic transition also indicates a perfect ontic difference between these domains of reality. As effects, the mental states and operations are closely characterized by their perfect ontic difference from the neuronal causation. Consequently, the reality of mental or conscious states and processes prove themselves in contrast to the causal phenomenality of neuronal states and structures to be most distinctively autonomous. Such an existential autonomy of purely mental reality is necessarily supplemented with an existential uniqueness and finality of the highest degree.

We have discussed the *constant* coexistence of reality and causality in ontological causation. The constancy of the ontological-causal nexus safeguards the existential constancy of the *reality in itself* whose fundamental characteristics we identify in every mode of being as the existential autonomy, unity and finality. At the level of the bodily causation of mental states and operations, the constant neuronal causation should result into a constant autonomous existence of consciousness. This appears to be in contradiction with the commonly observed momentary causation of mental states and operations. All mental states and processes, namely, the sensation, perception, thinking, imagination, etc., are momentary events which are brought about through momentary neuronal causations; i.e., they are initiated by neuronal processes and can persist, only as long as they are being *caused.* If we consider this momentary neuronal causation of mental states and operations alone, we could only reach a conclusion that the mind is a mere composition or rather summation of all our momentary mental states and operations. In other words, the existence of consciousness is solely based on the existence of momentary mental states and operations. However, the neuronal causation as ontological causation also forms a constant existential causation out of which a constant existential reality of mind and its fundamental characteristics, namely, the existential autonomy, unity, and finality should evolve. That is to say, the neurons cause not only the momentary mental states and processes, but also, primarily, the constant and autonomous existence of mind. In this way, the totality of our mind appears to be grounded on a twofold ontological-neuronal causation; the mind attains – with respect to the momentary and constant ontological-neuronal causation – a dual form of existence as represented by the existential constancy of mind and the momentary mental states and operations.

7. The Mental Causation

The momentary neuronal causation – although its effects, namely, the mental states and operations, are bestowed with a reality in itself (independent of the physical phenomenality of the brain) – forms eventually not a perfect existential but a rather functional or mere operational base of consciousness. In contrast, the constant ontological-neuronal causation appears to create and safeguard a primary mode of existence of mind which need not be supported by momentary neuronal causations. It would be interesting to observe how this twofold causation of mind and mental states and operations is significant in analyzing the mental causation of bodily volition. This reversed mode of causation, as compared to the neuronal causation of mind, remains a puzzle. Both these modes of causal nexus relate to a necessary interaction between body and mind, which forms the most fundamental aspect of the mind-body-problem – since it was introduced in the modern philosophical discourse by René Descartes. However, the mental causation of bodily volition appears to be more complex than the neuronal causation of mental states and operations.

The puzzle of mental causation, as represented in current discourses on the causal connectivity between mind and brain, is based ultimately on the problem of initiation, to be more precise, on the problem of causal initiations of volition, i.e., the acts of free will. We are *conscious* of the fact that *we* alone initiate all our acts of free will – in terms of thinking and volition. That is to say, it is our mind alone that brings about all our acts of thinking and volition originally and causally. In reality, however, all our mental operations are *caused* by neuronal states and processes in brain. A primary neuronal causation should necessarily underlie the mental causation which appears to initiate a chain of bodily causal connections – from neuronal causation to the mechanical effects, i.e., movements of the body. This will result evidently into a (logical-epistemological) vicious circle in the form a *hard-wired* system. Many Neurobiologists argue, based on this problem that it is not 'I', the subject, but the brain alone causes or causally initiates all the free acts of mind. I, however, feel that 'I', i.e., my mind alone, initiates all my free acts of thinking and volition. When I take a decision against all the valid and sufficient grounds which support a particular strategic undertaking, I act freely and autonomously. But the decision of *my* mind appears to be *primarily* caused or causally initiated by a neuronal process in my brain. This brings me into a difficult situation in which I have to ask myself the question, 'who decides?' 'I', i.e., my mind or my brain!

The mental causation will remain a puzzle, as long as we conceive our subjectivity as a totality of all our momentary perceptive and aperceptive states and operations (as represented in various modes of sensation, thinking, imagination, etc.). The momentary neuronal causation which brings about mental states and operations is normally an irreversible causal process, in which an effect should *temporally* follow a cause. We have, however, identified within the causal nexus between brain and mind a twofold, i.e., momentary and constant causation. Accordingly, the subject is not just a mere totality or synthesis of all momentary mental states and operations which are caused through (momentary) neuronal processes in brain; instead, it evolves *primarily* from a constant ontological causation in which the neuronal states and processes in brain, as elementary modes of physical being or reality, *constantly cause* the existence and reality of mind in a perfect ontic transition (as discussed above). We have seen how such a constant ontological causation can be identified at different levels of an ontic structure of reality. Through the constant ontological causation every mode of being or reality attains its existential autonomy, unity and finality, irrespective of the nature of the elementary modes of being which cause this particular mode of being ontologically and constantly. The constant ontological causation has its most appropriate expression in the *creation* of mind, since the mind as effect evolves in a perfect ontic transition from neuronal causation (through which the mental states and operations develop distinctively their autonomy, uniqueness, and finality).

In this way, the mind appears to have a *primary* and constant mode of existence (or reality) which distinguishes it from all the secondary and momentary modes of mental existence, as represented by all forms of momentary mental states and processes of thinking, perception, imagination, etc. This primary and constant reality of mind appears, furthermore, to establish the deepest foundation of our consciousness and also of our unconscious states and operations. The initiation of all the acts of free will could, therefore, be conceived as the accomplishment of this primary and thoroughly autonomous mode of existence of the mind. 'I' experience such an initiation directly, compared to all other uncontrollable neuronal causations of mental states and operations. For example, all bodily and outer-bodily sensations are finally initiated through neuronal processes. I *should* perceive the colour and sound of external, i.e., outer-bodily objects, the pain or the taste in my body, etc., how they are brought about through a chain of causal connections – from mechanical, chemical or electro-chemical to neuronal causations; I cannot change my sensations in my immediate perceptive experience. As opposed to this, I experience my thinking and volition to be acts of my free will; I can form and control them how *I* want them to be. I identify my free will in principle not just in the course of my free acts of thinking and volition, but more precisely in the constant initiation of these conscious processes in my mind. Such an experience of free mental initiation (of thinking and volition) cannot be brought about through mere neuronal states and processes. This leads to the conclusion that the primary realm of my subjectivity, which evolves from a constant ontological-neuronal causation and attains, as such, the most perfect autonomy (i.e., ontological-causal independence from an elementary and phenomenal causality of neuronal processes in brain), *initiates* even the neuronal causations of the acts of my free will.

This most primary mental initiation of free will and its acts (thinking and volition) is a necessary condition for my direct and immediate experience of my free will in my mind. If, as opposed to this, all my acts of thinking and volition are caused merely through neuronal processes, I cannot *experience* them in my mind as acts of my free will. In this case, the origin of my free thinking and volition becomes similar to the neuronal causation of my sensory perceptions which I cannot control subjectively. Moreover, I cannot act *freely* – verbally and bodily – if all my acts of thinking and volition are entirely initiated through neuronal processes in my brain alone; I would, in this case, act like a robot which can only function mechanically. Both sensation, which are finally initiated through neuronal processes, and the mental initiation of thinking and volition *occur* in the realm of mind, the existence of which as a distinct mode of reality and its perfect autonomy from the physical phenomenality of the brain form a necessity. It is this realm of *my existence* which connects my brain, a gray stuff hidden in my skull, with the world outside. If all my mental states and operations are initiated and caused merely through neuronal processes, I, strictly speaking, don't need my mind as a distinct and necessary realm of my existence (in other words, this condition makes my mind existentially superfluous). In this situation, I need my eyes and ears not for seeing and hearing, but just for receiving the light rays and sound waves reflected from external objects, which then eventually create retinal images and the vibrations of the eardrum – the sole inputs of neuronal processes underlying the faculties of vision and hearing. Similarly, I don't need the realm of a logical subjectivity – in order to consciously think, remember, or imagine – as all these operations can be entirely initiated and carried forth by my brain alone. In short, if the initiation of all the mental states and operations is restricted to the phenomenality of the brain alone, it does not necessitate the realm of mind as a perfectly distinct and autonomous mode of existence.

The immediately experienced operations of conscious thinking and volition indicate a realm of mind which has a perfect autonomy from the realm of brain, and on which all the conscious states and operations of the will are based. The existence of such a realm – or mode of reality – has a definite function which surpasses the extent of ontological-neuronal causation in brain. The subjective experience of my freedom of thinking and volition is primarily anchored in this realm of my mind. If all my bodily and outer-bodily sensations as well as my acts of thinking, imagination, volition, etc., can be perfectly reduced to mere neuronal processes in brain, I could still, even without my subjectivity, appear to be a normal human being. My self, however, will be devoid of consciousness; in other words, I will never experience that 'I' as a conscious being *exists*.

Since I *experience* all my subjective operations – sensation, perception, thinking, imagination, etc., – within myself, I conclude that the realm of my mind, which reveals a clear ontic difference from the realm of my brain and body, proves to be an existential necessity. This necessity clearly indicates that the initiation of my conscious acts of thinking and volition (which can be subsumed under my free will) is not established primarily through momentary neuronal processes in my brain, but it occurs in a *constantly effectuated* realm of my mind which, as compared to the physical phenomenality of the brain, form a perfectly autonomous, unique and final mode of reality. A *constant* neuronal causation underlies this reality of my mind. It, however, constitutes an ontically different, i.e., autonomous mode of existence which constantly safeguards the existence of my subjectivity or my consciousness, in short, my immediate experience that *I am.*[10]

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[10] This article is a revised version of my lecture, "Mind-Body-Dualism: The Concept of Constant Causation," under the series "Bosch Lectures," held on 7th December 2007, at Robert Bosch India Ltd., Bangalore. It is also based on a recent postdoctoral publication (pre-print) in Freiburger Dokumentenserver: ref. *Modi der Wirklichkeit. die ontische Struktur der Wirklichkeit und das Problem der zureichenden Kausalität* (Modes of Reality: The Ontic Structure of Reality and the Problem of Sufficient Causation). FreiDok, Freiburg i. Br. 2007, http://www.freidok.uni-freiburg.de/volltexte/4936/.

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MYSTICISM
The Matrix to Transcend 'Brain, Mind, and Soul'

Kurian Perumpallikunnel[◆]

1. Introduction

As some astrophysicists predict a 'Big Crunch' at the other end of the 'Big Bang', it looks as if a convergence of physics and metaphysics is gaining momentum. Quantum physics, the physics of the subatomic elementary particles, now seems to propose theories which are quasi-mystical in nature and content. Quantum and astrophysicists are now asking epistemological questions about how we can know about the universe in terms of its more distant objects (quasars, black holes), its size (finite vs. infinite), quantity (universes vs. multiverse), and 'life span' (eternal [i.e., open] or thermodynamically limited [i.e., closed and inevitably doomed to collapse into a Big Crunch and then another Big Bang, a pulsating universe]). Geneticists are asking ethical questions about what is the nature of man in molecular terms regarding possible genetic controls of behaviour and man's similarity or close kinship with chimpanzees and other 'advanced' animals. They are also asking questions as to what extent the genetic code of humans should be altered or edited to remove defects or even improve humankind. The theoretical possibility of incorporating nonhuman genetic material into people has even been considered. Medical technologists have asked the question whether life should be extended 'at any cost' both physically and financially. Advanced life support systems can maintain otherwise hopelessly incapacitated people in a vegetative state almost indefinitely. The issue of quality of life and whether life is worth living under those conditions arises and, therefore, the value or meaning of life itself is questioned. These questions go to man's fundamental assumptions about his universe and himself which traditionally is the study of first principles or metaphysics, the core discipline of philosophy.

From the other end, it seems that religions are influenced strongly by the economic systems of society, as illustrated in the hunting-gathering, agricultural, industrial and information-based societies of the world.

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Religions continue to claim to have a hold on Para-normal, Supra-normal psychic phenomena such as ESP (extra sensory perception), precognition, telepathy, and NDE (near-death experience), which the science fails to explain fully. Scientists are fully aware of presently available cumulative statistical database for experiments studying such phenomena. They provide strong, scientifically credible evidence for repeatable, anomalous effects. Though the brain is physical, these phenomena involve non-physical communication, thus implying the existence of some non-physical entity in addition to the brain.

2. Monism versus Dualism

The question of whether mind and body are separate entities is one of conscious man's oldest conundrums. Dualistic thinking is almost universal. In every society, the vast majority of people believe in supernatural beings, spirits without bodies. In every society, the vast majority of people believe that they would survive death. Conventional science takes the stance of monism, i.e., that brain and mind are one and the same – or rather that the mind is a function of the brain as software is a function of the computer that runs it. The Cartesian dualism of mind and matter necessarily involved the problem of how mind and brain could interact in perception and in willed acts. Most philosophers now argue that the hopeless difficulties of this problem have rendered untenable both dualism and the interactionist view of brain-mind liaison. Brain science increasingly shows that the qualities of mental life that we associate with souls' – memory, self-control, decision-making, etc., – are purely corporeal; they emerge from biochemical processes in the brain. Hence, they assert that our physical brain is our soul. However, there are numerous arguments to suggest that the (non-physical) mind (and soul) is distinct from the (physical) brain.

Biologically, we are primates, close relatives of chimpanzees, with which we have more than 98 percent of our DNA in common. In terms of genes, the kinship is even closer, as part of the difference concerns 'junk DNA', which has no coding function. Yet, mentally, the distance that separates us from our simian cousins is huge. In the past, this was explained by our having a soul that animals did not possess. Today, the explanation is that we have a bigger brain. What is it about this organ that explains the wonders of mental life? In recent years, this question has become a central topic of research, sometimes referred to as the 'last frontier', involving some of the best neurobiologists, psychologists, cognitive scientists, computer experts, and philosophers in the world.

Progress in the neurosciences raises lots of other interesting philosophical questions, which necessarily overlap with religious and theological concerns. First, there is the question of reductionism and how far it can go? If we can reduce certain metaphysical phenomena, say mystical experiences of enlightenment, to neurological processes, does that mean that we have adequately explained the experience and can dismiss it? What happens if we invent ways to simulate these peak experiences at will? If the brain is a deterministic system, then how can we talk about free will, moral responsibility, and creative choice? If personality is intrinsically linked to brain chemistry should we reject the dualism between brain and mind, body and soul?

3. Mystical Answers to the Fundamental Question

In the long evolutionary process, as and when humanity attained the ability to reflect upon itself, the fundamental question surfaced is "Who am I?" and it is resonated in "Who are you?" The human history is embedded with numerous answers given to these fundamental questions. The Hindu Vedas, the oldest among the religious scriptures, answered: "I am God" (*Aham Brahmasmi*) and there was the echo, "You are that" (*Tat tvam asi*). True to Ṛg Veda's prediction (*ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*: the reality is one, the learned speak of it differently, RV 1.164.46), very soon experts began expressing their conflicting views regarding the 'reality' and this continues even to this day. Each claims that his/her answer is the best and qualitatively different from the rest. By way of attempting to understand and explain the true nature of reality, these experts dissected and dismembered 'reality' into bits and pieces and now its mutilated corpse lies on the dissection table of various religions, philosophies and systems of thought. Like those five blind men who went to see the elephant, numerous claims and counterclaims reverberate at the religious and secular scenarios. Since this arena is often controlled by fanatic diehards and the situation can turn out to be ugly and life threatening this present article will not attempt to prove or disprove any of those claims, revelations or assertions.

There existed, or fortunately still exists, within and without the confines of religions a certain kind of 'eccentric' people who refuse to divide and subdivide reality into bits and pieces. Their observations and declarations were often controversial because it seems that they even enjoyed contradicting themselves and were full of paradoxes and lack of precision. While the orthodox religious persons shun them because they are dangerous and unpredictable, philosophers and scientists ridicule them as they are illogical and do not fit into their mathematical calculations and measurements (These 'eccentrics' find no problem in saying, for example, that one is equal to many and many are equal to one!). However, surprisingly these are a group of people who enjoy tremendous influence on the general public since they seem to possess a 'heart' that has got reasons which 'heads' of the religious hierarchy, philosophers and scientists fail to comprehend. These people who are strange and at times even bizarre are called mystics and the wisdom they wield is called mysticism.

4. The Upaniṣadic Concept of a Human Person

Chandogya Upaniṣad, part six relates the story of Śvetaketu who returned home proud and arrogant after twelve years of astute Vedic studies. His father Uddalaka Āruṇi confronted him with a series of questions that bewildered him to the core. Uddalaka slowly but surely led his son to the ultimate knowledge which eluded him even after completing his Vedic studies. Śvetaketu was informed that "In the beginning this universe was Being (*Sat*) alone, One only without a second. This Being (*Brahman*) decided to evolve and multiply and as a result everything seen and unseen came into existence." He continues to explain how various beings thus came to existence supported and sustained each other by becoming the food for each other. Aruṇi, then, elucidates how the very same food contributes to the development of various aspects of a person. According to him, just as the same milk gives rise to various milk products, and the same clay takes shape into various household utensils, the food we consume produces our flesh, blood, mind, life energy (*prāṇa*), and the rest. According to Aruṇi a person consists of sixteen parts. He arranges for his son a hands-on experience so that he may have a firsthand knowledge of what he was being taught. He was asked to refrain from eating for the next fifteen days. Then, he came to his father and said: "What, Sir, shall I recite?" His father said: "The Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma verses." He replied: "They do not occur to me, Sir." His father said to him: "Just as, my dear, of a great blazing fire a single coal, the size of a firefly, may be left, which would not burn much more than that, even so, my dear, of your sixteen parts only one part (*prāṇa*) alone is left; and therefore with that one part you do not remember the Vedas. Now go and eat and you will understand me." Uddalaka continued his awe-inspiring instruction (a technique which is far superior to the peripatetic method of Socrates!) in order to lead his son to the realization that all creatures have their root in Being, they dwell in Being, and finally they rest in Being. He was made to understand that in a seed a tree is subtly present and like salt in the water Brahman is omnipresent. Like guiding a blindfolded person to his native country Uddalaka led his son through the thicket of ignorance to the ultimate liberation of realizing 'that thou art' (*tat tvam asi*).

5. The Buddhist Understanding of a Human Person

Buddha accepted the basic Hindu doctrines of reincarnation and karma, as well as the notion that the ultimate goal of the religious life is to escape the cycle of death and rebirth. Buddha asserted that what keeps us bound to the death-rebirth process is desire, desire in the sense of wanting or craving anything in the world. Hence, the goal of getting off the wheel of reincarnation necessarily involves freeing oneself from desire. *Nirvāṇa* is the Buddhist term for liberation. *Nirvāṇa* literally means extinction, and it refers to the extinction of all cravings, an extinction that allows one to become liberated. Where Buddha departed most radically from Hinduism was his doctrine of *anatta*, the notion that individuals do not possess eternal souls. Instead of eternal souls, individuals consist of a 'bundle' of habits, memories, sensations, desires, and so forth, which together delude one into thinking that he or she consists of a stable, lasting self. Despite its transitory nature, this false self hangs together as a unit, and even reincarnates in body after body. In Buddhism, life in a corporeal body is the source of all suffering. Hence, the goal is to obtain release. In Buddhism, this calls for abandoning the false sense of self, so that the bundle of memories and impulses disintegrates, leaving nothing to reincarnate and hence nothing to experience pain.

6. The Jewish Understanding of Human Person

Unlike many other religions, Judaism does not focus much on abstract cosmological concepts. However, in Jewish circles, uncertainty prevailed concerning the constitution of a human person. The Sadducees were materialists, denying immortality and all spiritual existence. The Pharisees maintained these doctrines, adding belief in pre-existence and transmigration. The psychology of the Rabbis is founded on the Sacred Books, particularly the account of the creation of man in Genesis. Three terms are used for the soul: *nephesh*, *nuah*, and *neshamah*; the first refers to the animal and vegetative nature, the second to the ethical principle, the third to the purely spiritual intelligence. At all events, it is evident that the Old Testament throughout either asserts or implies the distinct reality of the soul. An important contribution to later Jewish thought was the infusion of Platonism into it by Philo of Alexandria. He taught the Divine origin of the soul, its pre-existence and transmigration; he contrasts the *pneuma* or spiritual essence, with the soul proper, the source of vital phenomena, whose seat is the blood; finally, he revived the old Platonic Dualism, attributing the origin of sin and evil to the union of spirit with matter.

Although Jews have certainly considered the nature of God, man, the universe, life and the afterlife at great length, there is no mandated, official, definitive belief on these subjects, outside of the very general concepts. There is substantial room for personal opinion on all of these matters because Judaism is more concerned about actions than beliefs. In *Kabbalah* as well as other systems of Jewish mysticism, the soul occupies a prominent position. Mysticism's centre of gravity is the close kinship between the human and the Divine; and the only avenue through which this kinship can become real to us is the soul. *Zohar*[1] claims that there was originally one 'Universal Soul', which broke itself up and encased itself in individual bodies. All individual souls are, hence, fragments of the 'Universal Soul' so that although they are distinct from one another they are, in reality, all *one*. Every human being possesses a soul which, in its pristine form, is 'pure'. The soul is a trinity. It comprises three elements, viz., (a) *Neshāmāh*, the rational element which is the highest phase of existence; (b) *Ruah*, the moral element, the seat of good and evil, the ethical qualities; (c) *Nefesh*, the gross side of spirit, the vital element which is *en rapport* with the body, and the mainspring of all the movements, instincts, and cravings of the physical life. In these three – i.e., *Neshāmāh*, *Ruah*, *Nefesh* – we find an exact image (*diyūkna*) of what is above in the celestial world. For *all three* form only *one* soul, one being, where all is *one*. The soul's most visible, most tangible, most perceivable quality is love. The soul is the root of love. Love is the symbol of the soul. According to the *Zohar*, the soul in its most exalted state as *Neshāmāh* can only enjoy the love inherent in its union with its source after it has freed itself from the contamination of earthly bodies. It is nevertheless possible, under certain conditions, to realise this ecstatic love while the soul is in the living body of an individual. One of these conditions is *the act of serving* God, the chief outward concomitant of which is *prayer*. The service of God, emerging out of love, leads the soul into union with the place of its origin, and it gives it, as it were, a foretaste of the ineffable felicity which awaits it in its highest condition as *Neshāmāh*.

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[1] *Zohar* (Hebrew: זֹהַר, lit., *splendour* or *radiance*) is widely considered the most important work of *Kabbalah* or Jewish mysticism. It is a mystical commentary on the Torah (the five books of Moses), written in medieval Aramaic. It contains a mystical discussion of the nature of God, the origin and structure of the universe, the nature of soul, sin, redemption, good and evil, and the relationship between God and man. The *Zohar* is not one book, but a group of books.

Just as there are variations in the physical qualities of men, so there are corresponding variations in their souls. Hence, there are souls which are good and souls which are bad and souls of all the shades of value which lie between these two extremes. The verse "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One" (Deut. 6:4) hints, says the *Zohar*, at this blending of the soul into a Unity. When the soul has completed the cycle of its earthly career and hurries back to become blended with the Universal soul, it revels in ecstasies of love, which the *Zohar* describes with a wealth of poetic phraseology. The soul is received in what is termed a 'treasury of life' or, sometimes, a 'temple of love', and one of its crowning joys is to contemplate the Divine Presence through a 'shining mirror' since a direct vision of God is impossible.

7. The Christian Understanding of Human Person

Christianity, after centuries of debate and deliberation, consolidated various theories of past and brought their scattered elements of truth into focus. The Catholic doctrine on the nature, unity, substantiality, spirituality, and origin of human person holds that the body and soul mutually compenetrate in their activities. Man is two and one, a divisible but a vital unity. The general focus of Christ's teaching was on the spiritual side of the human being; the salvation or loss of the soul was the great issue of existence. The Gospel language is popular, not technical. *Psyche* and *pneuma* are used indifferently either for the principle of natural life or for spirit in the strict sense. Body and soul are recognized as two different entities and their values contrasted: "Fear you not them that kill the body ... but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Lk. 12:5).

In St. Paul we find a more technical phraseology employed with great consistency. *Psyche* is now appropriated to the purely natural life; *pneuma* to the life of supernatural religion, the principle of which is the Holy Spirit, dwelling and operating in the heart. The opposition of flesh and spirit is accentuated afresh (Rom. 1:18). This Pauline system, presented to a world already prepossessed in favour of a quasi-Platonic dualism, occasioned the emergence of the doctrine of trichotomy. According to this, man, perfect man (*teleios*) consists of three parts: body, soul, spirit (*soma*, *psyche*, *pneuma*). Body and soul come by natural birth; spirit is given to the 'born-again' Christian alone. Thus, the "newness of life," of which St. Paul speaks, was conceived by some as a superadded entity, a kind of 'higher-soul' sublimating the 'natural man' into a higher species.

8. The Islamic Understanding of Human Person

The concepts of mind, self, soul, and spirit are closely related in the Holy Qur'an. The discussion of the human soul, its existence, nature, ultimate objective and eternity occupies a highly important position in Islamic thought and forms its main focus. The soul consists of different parts and those parts in unison work for one final goal, happiness. Muslim philosophers on the whole agree that the soul consists of non-rational and rational parts. The non-rational part they divide into the plant and animal souls, the rational part into the practical and the theoretical intellects. The non-rational part is linked essentially to the body, but some consider the rational part as separate from the body by nature and others that all the parts of the soul are by nature material. The Islamic philosophers agree that, while the soul is in the body and its non-rational part is to manage the body, its practical intellect is to manage worldly affairs, including those of the body through apprehension of particular things so that it can do the good and avoid the bad. Its theoretical intellect is to know the eternal aspects of the universe. They thought that the ultimate end or happiness of the soul depends on its ability to separate itself from the demands of the body and to focus on grasping the eternal aspects of the universe. All believe that the non-rational soul comes into being and unavoidably perishes. Some, like al-Farabi, believe that the rational soul may or may not survive eternally; others, like Ibn Sina, believe that it has no beginning and no end; still others, such as Ibn Rushd, believe that the soul with all its individual parts comes into existence and is eventually destroyed.

9. Scientific Understanding of Human Person

The ancient world held different internal organs such as stomach, liver, etc., as the source of thoughts and feelings. Improved anatomical information led them to settle for 'heart' for quite a while. It was in 1600, a young English doctor William Harvey (1578-1657) eventually discovered that the 'heart sends blood through the body in a loop' and functioned basically as a pump. This sent out philosophical shockwaves. Harvey began teaching his theories to some of the students, including a young man named Thomas Willis. Harvey continued his experimental methods and traced the course of blood through the body, while his student Willis eventually tracked the flow of blood to the brain. In attempting to understand its function there, he gave the first account of the network of nerves and blood vessels on which our understanding of that organ is based.

The human brain has the same general structure as the brains of other mammals, but is over five times as large as the 'average brain' of a mammal with the same body size. Most of the expansion comes from the cerebral cortex, a convoluted layer of neural tissue that covers the surface of the forebrain. Especially expanded are the frontal lobes, which are involved in executive functions such as self-control, planning, reasoning, and abstract thought. The portion of the brain devoted to vision is also greatly enlarged in humans, and some regions of the human brain, such as those devoted to language, have no clear counterparts in the brains of other animals. Human brain evolution, from the earliest shrew like mammals through primates to hominids, is marked by a steady increase in encephalization, or the ratio of brain to body size. The human brain has been estimated to contain one hundred billion neurons. Each neuron has on average about 7×10^3 (seven thousand) synaptic connections. A three-year old child has about 10^{16} synapses (10 quadrillion), but this happily decreases with age to a more manageable number between 10^{15} to 5×10^{15} synapses (1 to 5 quadrillion).

10. The Mind: Material or Immaterial?

It is amazing to verify that even after several centuries of philosophical reflections, hard dedication to brain research and remarkable advances in the field of neuroscience, the concept of mind still remains obscure, controversial and impossible to define within the limits of our language. One strongly held view is that the mind is an entity distinct from the brain with different and undefined physical character. In this theory the mind was seen as synonymous with the soul, forming an integral part of the prevailing religious culture. For example, René Descartes (1596-1650), the French philosopher, perpetuated Plato's (428-348 BC) mind-body dualism, philosophically separating the mind and the body. His ideas permeated philosophical and scientific views right up to the present day, changing the way in which mainstream research approached the problem of self. Since the mind and brain were now usually viewed as isolated entities, research into these areas was inherently separate: while biochemists concerned themselves with objective somatic mechanisms, psychologists wrestled with the subjective properties of the mind; philosophers and theologians carried with them the spirit and the soul.

In connection with the investigation of our mental operations there arises the question, whether these are to be deemed coextensive with consciousness. Are there unconscious mental processes? In recent years, the phenomena of hypnotism, 'multiple personality', and abnormal forms of mental life have brought the question of the relation between the unconscious and the conscious processes in the human organism into greater prominence. It was established that all forms of mental life, e.g., perception, thought, feeling, and volition are profoundly affected by vital activities and may not always emerge into the strata of conscious life. If the mind be identified with the soul, and if the latter be allowed to be the principle of vegetative life, there can be no valid reason for denying that the principle of our mental life may be also the subject of unconscious activities. But if we confine the term mind to the soul, viewed as conscious, or as the subject of intellectual operations, then by definition we exclude unconscious states from the sphere of mind. Still whatever terminology we may find convenient to adopt, the fact remains that our most purely intellectual operations are profoundly influenced by changes which take place below the surface of consciousness.

11. Soul: Temporal or Eternal?

History is filled with attempts to prove that the soul is real. In 1921 physician Duncan MacDougall devised the famous '21 grams' experiment to detect the exit of the soul from the body by measuring how a person's weight changes immediately after death. He monitored six deaths and reported that the people lost anywhere between 11 and 43 grams at death (not always 21 grams as is popularly reported), which he took as the material weight of the soul. Follow-up experiments failed to replicate

MacDougall's findings, and some researchers attributed the weight loss to straightforward processes like the evaporation of water from the body. Researchers in England, the Netherlands, and the United States of America are searching for the soul in a different way, focusing on experiential as well as material evidence. At places like the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, California, researchers examine various aspects of consciousness to see if it functions independently of the physical brain, implying the existence of an independent life spirit.

It is true that the question of the reality of the soul and its distinction from the body is among the most important problems of philosophy, for with it is bound up the doctrine of a future life. A general understanding of the soul is that it is present in a living being and survives after the death of the living being. The soul may be defined as the ultimate internal principle by which we think, feel, and will, and by which our bodies are animated. The term 'mind' usually denotes this principle as the subject of our conscious states, while 'soul' denotes the source of our vegetative activities as well. That our vital activities proceed from a principle capable of subsisting in itself is the thesis of the substantiality of the soul: that this principle is not itself composite, extended, corporeal, or essentially and intrinsically dependent on the body is the doctrine of spirituality. If there be a life after death, clearly the agent or subject of our vital activities must be capable of an existence separate from the body. The belief in an animating principle in some sense distinct from the body is an almost inevitable inference from the observed facts of life. More and more we are realizing that the brain is complex enough to account for the mysteries of learning, memory, emotion, creativity, consciousness, mystical-religious experience and madness.

12. Critique of Science and Theology

Definitions in science are not static. They keep on changing as new knowledge accumulates. Scientists talk only about concepts recognised by science, using terminology recognised by it. They often move in the preset grooves and attitudes. This can result in remaining stuck to those grooves. Once a scientist finds that the groves are impeding the advancement of science, not allowing it to look at unexplained facts from new angles, he will be forced to have a hard look at the grooves, move out of them, and tread a new path. When he walks along that path, he may find walking alone. Then, maybe after his death, others start following the path, find it worthwhile, and it becomes a thoroughfare. It becomes part of the scientific grooves. That is how science has grown. Some examples of the now discarded grooves are the theory of earth being the central point of the solar system, theory of indivisibility of the atom and the theory of indestructibility of matter.

Whether the soul is a scientific concept or not depends on what our concept of science is. If by science we mean the existing scientific knowledge neatly packed in science textbooks, journals and laboratories, then such science is a dead science. It may be science today, but not necessarily tomorrow. Within our present concept of science, soul may not be a scientific concept. But, if by science we mean a package including the above, plus all the unexplained observations waiting for an answer, along with the theories to explain them, then soul may be termed a scientific concept or, may be a candidate for scientific concept. When the hypothesis gathers enough evidence it becomes a theory, and the candidate concept becomes an accepted concept. Such science is dynamic and alive. Within such science, the concept of soul would be a valid concept, to be discussed, debated, observed, experimented and proven, if possible (there are limits to scientific experimentation and observation; in certain situations, the very act of observation changes what is being observed).

It is immensely unlikely that mind is a mere by-product of matter. For if our mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of electrons in our brain, we have no reason to suppose that our beliefs are true. In order to escape from this necessity of sawing away the branch on which we are sitting, we are compelled to believe that mind is not wholly conditioned by matter. Moreover, this is a rather depressing view as it would mean that we as unique and sentient individuals do not really exist. We are merely the products of inert matter and energy randomly thrown together by the cosmic winds blowing for an infinite time as a roomful of monkeys bashing at keyboards would eventually type the complete works of Shakespeare. The random emergence of even the simplest cell within a specified time span is itself dubious emergence of a well-structured universe within comparatively a limited period without the aid of a powerful mastermind is all the more difficult to conceive.

Human beings are emotional beings. We feel joy, sorrow, anger, fear, etc. Though we try to balance these with logic it is hard to deny that we are ultimately driven by our emotions. But to mere automaton, which is what we are without a distinct mind or soul, emotion would be redundant and deleterious. Likewise, our art, music, literature, aesthetics and other human expressions and qualities will lack lustre and relevance.

Despite centuries of modern philosophical and scientific research into the nature of the mind, at present there is no technology that detects the presence or absence of any kind of consciousness, for scientists do not even know what exactly is to be measured. Strictly speaking, at present there is no scientific evidence even for the existence of consciousness. All the direct evidence we have consists of non-scientific, first-person accounts of being conscious. First-person accounts of anything do not count as adequate evidence in science. These need to be correlated and corroborated by other evidences.

13. Mysticism: The Matrix to Transcend Divisions

Technological advances and the knowledge that humanity acquired about the universe during the last thirty years is staggering. However, the progress achieved and the emphasis given to the field of science and technology sidelined certain other aspects of human wellbeing, which is evident from our behaviour towards ourselves, our fellow human beings, the other living organisms, and the entire planet in general. While conducting researches on the origin of the universe, the human being is unaware of his subtle nature beyond the physical aspects. Technology does not only fail to bring in peace, harmony and happiness, but leads to ecological and other disasters. Where division and competition are considered as the way forward, suffering is a natural consequence.

Mysticism has a unique *inclusive* way of looking at everything: the material and the immaterial, the physical and the spiritual, from the cell to the human to the universe, and always in terms of the oneness or consciousness paradigm. It is a vision that could lift the world out of its present impasse. Such a vision has been prevalent in almost every tradition, though the way of its articulation varied from culture to culture, religion to religion, underpinning the Hindu wisdom *ekam sat vipra behudha vadanti* (meaning, "Reality is one, the learned people speak of it differently").

Mystics invite us to an inner adventure which should be experienced rather than known through intellectual pursuit. However, they do not shun logic or science in their search for the really real. They do not want to be limited by the limits of these disciplines either. It is evident that in the present situation science lacks an adequate metaphysics for incorporating brain, mind, and soul while mysticism is potent to do so convincingly well.

Mysticism is capable of going beyond reductionism and materialism. The concept of 'emergence' says that *the whole is more than the sum of its parts*. Mind is an 'emergent' phenomenon. Mind cannot exist without a functional brain, but we could never predict consciousness on the basis of an exhaustive reductionist description of the brain. We can learn a lot of interesting things about a brain cell by studying its parts and its chemistry; yet, a brain cannot be adequately understood by listing its parts. Human body is not the sum total of its organs. Mind-brain really is not capable of doing anything by itself. To reach its potential, a mind-brain requires an entire body, vocal chords, oppositional thumbs, tools, languages, families, societies, cultures, and nature. Once individuals acquire their personal identity from the sea of people around them may at times be elevated into a different identity, a being that transcends the ordinary self. Poets and philosophers named it as 'awakening' and every sacred tradition is based largely upon it. Saints and sages have claimed that we can realize an identity beyond our personal history, an elevation from the 'mean self' to a 'great self'. The realization of an identity that transcends the constraints of ordinary selfhood has been celebrated by mystics of every religion. The German mystic Meister Eckhart was of the opinion that the ground of God and the ground of soul are one and the same. He dared to say that the eye with which he sees God is the same eye with which God sees him. The supreme identity represented in this statement is recognized by those who experienced it. Does this experience pertain only to the human world and stop within the realm of human beings? Humanity is not a blind alley. This experience has to proceed further.

In most general terms, we propose that to be a mystic means to be occupied with the 'really real' in one's own being. Here we must now differentiate two completely different kinds of mysticism that appear in the world: mysticism through identification and mysticism through relationship. Hinduism and Buddhism could be acknowledged as examples for the identification mysticism where one identifies or becomes one with *brahman* (*aham brahmāsmi*, "I am God") or *nirvāṇa/sūnyata* (nothingness). We find the relationship mysticism in all three Semitic religions: in the Jewish *Kabbalah*, in the Muslim *Sufism* and also the in Christian mysticism. They all are stamped by the fact that the mystics look for a relationship with God or with the God-image hidden within themselves. A Christian or Sufi mystic would stress the relationship aspect. Such a mystic remains human and does not identify with the divine.

14. Conclusion

Scientists claim that visible matter represents only a very small part of this uni(multi)verse. We are like an iceberg that floats on the ocean. The greatest part of us, and also the most fascinating, remains hidden in the invisible part of our totality. There is not only matter in the universe; there is also energy in various identified and unidentified forms. There is only very little knowledge of consciousness which also could be understood in terms of energy. Though the human attempt to deal with consciousness has a long history, our knowledge of it is meagre. It brings to us an extraordinary hope of discovering infinite possibilities in new energies. We have a wonderful future before us if the concept of unity in all things predominates in all our researches.

A craving to find unity in the seeming multiplicity of experience has led many thinkers to accept a monistic explanation, in which the apparent duality of mind and matter is reduced to a single underlying principle or substratum. Materialistic monism considers matter itself – body material substance – as this principle. For the materialist, mind, feelings, thoughts, and volitions are but "functions" or "aspects" of matter; mental life is an *epiphenomenon*, a by-product in the working of the Universe, which can in no way interfere with the course of physical changes or modify the movement of any particle of matter in the world; indeed, in strict consistency it should be held that successive mental acts do not influence or condition each other, but that thoughts and volitions are mere incidental appendages of certain nerve processes in the brain; and these latter are determined exclusively and completely by antecedent material processes. In other words, the materialistic theory, when consistently thought out, leads invariably to the startling conclusion that the human mind has had no real influence on the history of the human race.

On the other hand, the idealistic monist denies altogether the existence of any extra-mental, independent material world. So, far from mind being a mere aspect or *epiphenomenon* attached to matter, the material universe is a creation of the mind and is entirely dependent on it. It exists only in and for the mind. Our ideas are the only things of which we can be truly certain. Indeed, if we were compelled to embrace monism, it seems to us that there can be little doubt as to the logical superiority of the idealistic position. There is, however, no philosophical compulsion to adopt either a materialistic or an idealistic monism. The conviction of the common sense of humankind, the assumption of physical science that there are two orders of being in the universe, mind and matter, distinct from each other yet interacting and influencing each other, and the assurance that the human mind can obtain a limited yet true knowledge of the material world which really exists outside and independently of it occupying a space of three dimensions, which is the common teaching of the scholastic philosophy and Catholic thinkers, does not in any way contradict the mystical vision of reality. Mysticism finds relationships and unity wherever divisions are found. Mysticism finds cooperation wherever competition for the survival of the fittest is the rule. It will generate within us an awareness of ourselves in relationship with the world that surrounds us. In no other discipline we find a better understanding of the universal link that brings everything together. The development of a mystical consciousness among people will increase our collective possibilities to find solutions so that life on earth, guided by the behaviour of humanity, will move towards the betterment and protection of all.

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THE STILLED MIND

Bonaventure's Illumination Theory and the Vedānta School

Maria Hughes[◆]

1. Introduction

Despite the disparity between various schools of philosophical thought, philosophy in its essence is focused upon the attainment of wisdom. This is demonstrated in Plato's allegory of the cave when the man who had gone up and out into the light descends, once again, into the darkness in order to free the other fettered men. The problem that arises is this: how does one gain this wisdom? How is it that a confined man becomes unbound from his own chains within the cave of the mind?

In his theory of illumination, Bonaventure proposes that man becomes wise when he becomes aware of his mind's illumination by the eternal reasons. For Bonaventure, it is through participation with the eternal reasons in the divine mind that one gains certainty of knowledge. All men can possess this knowledge, but only the man of wisdom is able to understand the illumination by the eternal reasons as it pertains to all creation. Man's mind, however, begins in ignorance of these reasons because of the deformity caused by the original sin. How then does man's mind achieve self-awareness of the eternal reasons when he is initially unconscious of them?

Though Bonaventure never explicitly elucidates the issue, he does propose a general sketch of the ascent to Wisdom through the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtues coupled with contemplation. While Bonaventure offers a solution, it is not a practical one to the problem at hand, for he omits *the process* by which one cultivates virtue and contemplates. In the end, the question still remains unanswered: how does man obtain consciousness of the eternal reasons so that he may attain wisdom?

This article proposes that a synthesis can be formed between Bonaventure and the Advaita Vedānta School of Indian philosophy because the latter offers a process, called Yoga, in which man can become conscious of the eternal reasons. I begin by outlining Bonaventure's Illumination theory and the metaphysical and epistemological background

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of the Advaita Vedānta, drawing out the similarities and dissimilarities between the two. I, then, explicate the practice of Yoga, for it lends a precise procedure for breaking away from ignorance and ascending to Wisdom. It is accomplished through a stilling of the mind. Since the Hindu form of Yoga has a radically different metaphysical and epistemological foundation from Christianity, I will finally propose my own form of Christian Yoga, using the symbol of water as the central element.

2. Knowledge versus Wisdom in Bonaventure and the Vedānta School

The human mind attains knowledge of the world primarily through sense perception, memory, and experience. While these methods of cognition are sources of knowledge, they are nevertheless imperfect. Empirical forms of knowledge are limited because they are continually subject to change. This is demonstrated in two ways: the mind itself can often be erroneous. It can perceive wrongly, misunderstand, and even forget. In addition to this, an object of itself has a certain mutability to it, becoming another possible cause for error. Consequently, these created principles produce a deficient understanding of the world. Man, as a result, is perpetually modifying his knowledge of the world in order to perfectly comprehend it. In *The Historical Constitution of Saint Bonaventure's Philosophy*, Quinn states: "Human knowledge is caused by its objects, so that, depending on them, it can change according to the exigencies of the things that cause it. Thus, the certitude of human knowledge depends on the things causing it."[1] This poses a dilemma: if human knowledge is imperfect and limited due to its dependence on an object which is mutable, then how can man ever achieve certitude?

Bonaventure asserts that every living creature is engendered with an inherent immutability because it contains within it a *logos* (pl. *logoi*) – the expression of God imprinted in their being. The *logoi*, nonetheless, are not restricted to being only found in creation, for their origin is found within the Logos. As contained in the Logos, they are known as the eternal reasons and are the *perfection* of creation since the Logos is unchanging and absolute. This is akin to a multi-faceted diamond.

Each facet is the perfect idea of a living creature radiating out from the Logos. When light radiates from the diamond, each facet refracts the light, projecting many rays from the diamond. It is the eternal reasons contained within the Logos which project outward like the rays from a diamond, shining within creation and upon the mind of man. Certitude, then, is attained by the human mind when it is illumined by the eternal reasons and becomes aware of the cause and *telos* to which the object at hand is oriented.[2]

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[1] John F. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of Saint Bonaventure's Philosophy*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973, 444.

Illumination, nevertheless, does not depend on man's consciousness of it; for, as the Gospel of John states, "the Word is the light that enlightens all men" (John 1:9). Bonaventure stresses, however, the significance of man's awareness of the eternal reasons because without this realization man can be *knowledgeable* but *unwise*. Wisdom, according to Bonaventure, is acquired when man not only realizes his mind's illumination through the eternal reasons but when he also actively partakes and reposes in the divine: For, the minds of people of science attain these reasons as principles that move the mind, while the minds of the wise attain these reasons as principles by which they are led back to a point of repose.[3] The mind's initial state is ignorant of the eternal reasons, however, because of man's fallen nature. How then does man attain consciousness of the eternal reasons so that he may obtain wisdom?

Bonaventure outlines a general procedure of man's journey from the state of ignorance to the state of wisdom through the symbol of the mirror. Man's mind is akin to a mirror, obscured by dust (ignorance and moral imperfection) which has settled upon its surface.[4] This obscurity caused by ignorance and moral imperfection impedes the eternal reasons from clearly reflecting onto the mind as dust obstructs light from clearly shining onto the surface of the mirror:

> … but because it [the soul] is never fully conformed to God in this life, it does not attain to the reasons clearly, fully, and distinctly, but

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[2] White writes: "…the act [illumination] permits the philosopher to grasp not only an object but understand it in the light of the divine Idea, which is the exemplar of its being and the ultimate source of its intelligibility." John R. White, "The Illumination of Bonaventure: Divine Light in Theology, Philosophy and History according to Bonaventure," *Fides Quarens Mindum* 1, 2 (Winter 2001), 344.

[3] *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, q. 4. Corpus; V:19, trans. Zachary Hayes, New York: The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, 1992, 141.

[4] For, as St. Paul says, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror…" 1 Cor. 13:12.

> only to a greater or lesser degree according to the degree of its conformity to God.[5]

The removal of the dust must come through the act of polishing the mirror. This act of polishing, in Bonaventure's *The Soul's Journey to God*, comes through the contemplation of God, which is achieved through mastery of the senses and the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtues within oneself.[6] Bonaventure, however, does not explicitly state how one develops this self-mastery, cultivates virtue, or contemplates God. The question remains on how one fosters moral and intellectual virtue so that the mind can clearly reflect the eternal reasons, partake and repose in the divine.

The Advaita Vedānta, while differing in its cosmology from Bonaventure, offers a practical solution to the quandary surrounding man's path leading to self-awareness of the eternal reasons. Before that method is explicated, however, it is necessary to understand the philosophical background of the Vedānta School as well as its similarity to and divergence from Bonaventure's thought.

The Advaita Vedānta stems from a pantheistic belief in an Ultimate Reality (also known as Brahman, the Self, or Puruṣa) that is in all of creation.[7] All living and non-living entities are dependent on the life of the Ultimate Reality living within them. It is erroneous and ignorant of one to believe, therefore, that *any* entity is independent of this Reality. While this seems similar to Bonaventure, in the sense that all living creatures are dependent upon God in order to be kept in existence, this concept is wholly different. The Advaita Vedānta believes that objects are only different forms of the same Reality.

In order to comprehend this, *The Upaniṣads* (sacred texts in Hinduism) use the analogy of clay. Clay, while it can take on many different physical appearances, like a vase or a bowl, is still clay.[8] There is no uniqueness and individuality is non-existent. This also means that the individuality of humans is non-existent.

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[5] *DQKC*, q. 4. Corpus, 136.

[6] It is interesting to note that Bonaventure's symbol of the mirror is not just symbolic of man's mind but also of moral perfection. For Bonaventure, it is through moral perfection and intellectual cultivation that one is able to repose in the eternal reasons and come to understand God's manifestation in the world and in himself.

[7] There is not enough room in this article to engage in the differentiation between the name variations for this Ultimate Reality; however, a standard book on Hinduism would provide the reasons for these variations. For this article, however, the *Puruṣa* and the Self are both names for the Reality which is found in man. Brahman is another name for the Ultimate Reality which has not taken on a finite form.

Since all things *are* Brahman, there is a certain immutability to objects because this Reality within is absolute and unchanging (this is analogous to Bonaventure's *logoi*). The Advaita Vedānta asserts that man is in ignorance of this Ultimate Reality which composes both the world and himself. It is man's duty, therefore, to break from this perpetual cycle of ignorance and become enlightened of this truth through a realization of the Self or Brahman that lives within him.[9] It is when man becomes enlightened by this truth that he finally obtains wisdom.

How does man achieve this realization of the Self? The Advaita Vedānta differentiates between two types of knowledge: *vyavahārika-satya* (lower knowledge) and *pāramārthika-satya* (higher knowledge). Lower knowledge is formulated by man's experiential knowledge of the world through sense perception, memory, and other sources of cognition. According to Advaita Vedānta, this provides a very limited understanding of the world because these modes of knowing are confined to the impermanence of objects.[10] This impermanence, otherwise known as the illusory part of an object, is the apparent form that Brahman takes – hearkening back to the analogy of clay. It is the higher knowledge which leads to the ability to see Brahman within all objects and within oneself. It is this type of knowledge that leads to Wisdom. This higher knowledge is not gained, however, through intellectual endeavours or the scriptures but through Brahman's self-revelation to man and a process known as Yoga.[11]

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[8] *Chāṇdogya Upaniṣad* 6:1.4-1.6, Eknath Easwaran, trans. *The Upanishads*, Tomales: Nilgri Press, 1987.

[9] The *Bhagavad-Gita* states: "But ignorance is destroyed by knowledge of the Self within. The light of this knowledge shines like the sun, revealing the supreme Brahman" (verses 16-17).

[10] This is similar to Henry of Ghent's interpretation of Illumination. Bonaventure himself did not hold to this position. He believed that man *can* know the certitude of objects despite his ignorance of the eternal reasons. Knowledge formulated through cognition, while faulty, is not unreliable – it *is* a source of knowing.

[11] The *Bhagavad-Gita* says: "To those steadfast in love and devotion I give spiritual wisdom, so that they may come to me. Out of compassion I destroy the darkness of their ignorance. From within them I light the lamp of wisdom and dispel all darkness from their lives" (verses 10-11). Does this indicate, then, that there is an

3. Yoga is the Suppression of the Oscillations of Mental Substances

Self-realization, i.e., the attainment of Wisdom, arises in the silence of an undisturbed mind through a practice known as Yoga. The word 'yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, meaning to "make whole."[12] The practice of yoga can, then, be thought of as the art of becoming whole. This wholeness unites a spirit fragmented by passions, pre-conceived judgments, imagination, dreams and other forms of inner disturbance.

The method of becoming whole is through the stilling of the mind. Yoga revolves around Patañjali's teaching: "*Yoga citta vritti nirodha*" ("Yoga is the suppression of the oscillations of mental substance").[13] These oscillations are the mind's confinement to preconceived judgments, associations, imagination and other forms of fluctuation that are projected onto an object, distorting it from what it truly is.[14] This silencing of the mind does not give sudden enlightenment, but is a necessary first step. This stilling of the mind progresses to the next stage of Yoga, known as concentration *(dhāraṇā)*.

Concentration is defined as the maximum amount of attention focused on a single spot. This state of maximum attention, as I stated earlier, can only be achieved when the mind is calm and silenced. There are, however, good and bad forms of concentration. They fall under the categories of *disinterested* and *interested* concentration.[15] The former is when the mind is detached from enslaving thoughts or passions whereas the latter is dominated by them. It is the former that leads to enlightenment while the latter is what brings about mental fluctuations. While these two types seem disparate enough, it is easy to mistake the interested concentration for the disinterested one. I shall give an example to illustrate further. A monk absorbed in prayer, repeatedly chanting the *mantra*, such as "*Om*" over and over again in order to focus his mind on contemplating

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essential darkness to the mind? This is a possible area for future research.

[12] Ravi Ravindra, "Yoga and the Quintessential Search for Holiness," *Journal of Dharma* 20, 3 (July-September 1995), 245.

[13] Swami Hariharānanda Āranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, trans. P. N. Mukerji, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983, 6.

[14] Again, the *Bhagavad-Gita* states: "Just as a fire is covered by smoke and a mirror obscured by dust, just as the embryo rests deep within the womb, knowledge is hidden by selfish desire – hidden, Arjuna, by this unquenchable fire for self-satisfaction, the inveterate enemy of the wise" (verses 38-39).

[15] Anonymous, *Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism*, trans. Robert Powell, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1993, 9.

Brahman, is a form of disinterested concentration. It is a form of disinterested concentration because the monk uses the *mantra* as a way of emptying and detaching himself from distracting thoughts or feelings that may enter his mind. Another monk absorbed in prayer, focusing on conjuring up a *feeling* of joy as a way of contemplating Brahman is a form of interested concentration. This monk differs from the former because he is becoming absorbed and attached *in* a feeling, leading him not towards Brahman but rather away from Him.

Now, it is erroneous to presume that detachment is a form of passivity or non-thinking. Detachment does not focus on man being unemotional or unresponsive, but rather in not permitting these attachments to *dominate* him. Let's take the example that I had given in the previous paragraph concerning the monks. The monk who repeats the *mantra* could very well be feeling at peace or joyous in his communion with the divine. The difference is that he is not allowing the feelings or thoughts he is experiencing to hinder that communion. The other monk, on the contrary, permits the feeling to dominate his thoughts. This is what it means to be attached to something, whether it is an emotion, biases or thought processes. The monk who is attached to the feeling of joy cannot commune with the divine because, in a way, he has closed himself off through concentrating on the feeling and all the subsequent memories or images that it conjures up.

Moving onward, disinterested concentration leads into a meditative absorption called *dhyāna*. This state is where the attention between the subject and the object is undisturbed by mental fluctuations and the mind is entirely focused. When the mind becomes focused and completely emptied, it is not the self but *Puruṣ*a that sees. This state is called contemplation or *samādhi*. When a person reaches this state he can attend to the object and see it for what it truly *is* because his mind is open to the intelligibility of the object (this state is called *buddhi*).[16] Yoga philosophers believe that it is the *Puruṣa* that sees the object for what it truly is and not the mind because they believe that the mind, like all things, is an object and, therefore, cannot be a knower. The subject has to be one who is not an object, leaving *Puruṣa* as the only capable knower: "[it is] when the mind is totally silent and totally alert, both the real subject (*Puruṣa*) and the real object (*prakṛti*) are simultaneously present to it."[17]

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[16] Ravindra, "Yoga and the Quintessential Search for Holiness," 252.

Ravindra compares this to sculpting. The process of Yoga is a process of excavating the *Puruṣa* from the body, like chiselling a statue that is already within the piece of unformed marble, except that the "yogi himself is the stone and the tools."[18] The purpose of the entire progression from the stilling of the mind to *samādhi* is so that the *Puruṣa* within man can become uninhibited from clearly and accurately seeing the object at hand for what it truly is – as Brahman.[19]

Yoga, though it believes that stilling the mind is the key to obtaining enlightenment, is useless if one does not also nurture his moral life in conjunction with this practice. For this reason, Yoga also believes that consciousness of the Self can be achieved through charity and moral uprightness.[20] So, in order for one to achieve this higher state of mind, he must have a compassionate heart as well as a clear mind.

The goal behind yoga is to gain knowledge of the Reality within creation and oneself so that man may become united with this Reality and ultimately liberated (*mokṣa*) from his enslavement to ignorance and his own individuality. For in being united to Brahman, man loses his false identity as a person independent of Brahman. This includes liberation from body, personality, desires, and other unique characterizations of man that are not Brahman and, therefore, *not* who he really is.[21]

4. Christian Yoga and the Symbol of Water

Yoga, though rooted in a different epistemological foundation than Bonaventure, can be applied to Illumination as a means of solving the dilemma at hand. Instead of it being a practice to be liberated *from* one's self, the methods of yoga can be used as a means of a *reintegration* with oneself, the divine, and creation. Only when man reintegrates himself with the divine and the creation, can he finally be raised to that higher reality where he can perceive the eternal reasons clearly and repose in them. I will use the analogy of water in order to illustrate my point.

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[17] Ravindra, "Yoga and the Quintessential Search for Holiness," 249.

[18] Ravindra, "Yoga and the Quintessential Search for Holiness," 247.

[19] Ravindra compares mind to a translucent jewel which allows the object to colour the mind with its own colouring, for the *Puruṣa* receives certitude of the object passively.

[20] "Consciousness [associated with the mind] can achieve clarity and calmness through the cultivation of friendliness towards the happy, compassion towards the miserable, joy towards the virtuous and indifference towards the non-virtuous." Ashok Kumar Malhotra, *An Introduction to Yoga Philosophy: An annotated Translation of the Yoga Sutras*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2001, 30.

[21] This is a limitation in Hindu thought because it destroys the individual and creates a dualism between body and spirit which of itself leads to many philosophical problems, though it cannot be elaborated upon in this article.

As I stated earlier, human mind is continually being illuminated by the eternal reasons, regardless of his awareness of them. Ignorance, however, does affect the clarity with which the eternal reasons reflect upon the mind. This ignorance impedes man's capacity to recognize the *logoi* within all of creation, rendering the *cause* and *telos* of living creatures unknowable. This can be symbolized with water. When the light of the eternal reasons shine, reflecting the image of the object on the water's surface, it is whole, complete and seen clearly for what it truly is. When turbulence appears, ripples form in the water, distorting the image. This turbulence is analogous to mental fluctuations, specifically preconceived notions, associations, passions, imagination and other forms of inner disturbance. These mental fluctuations cause fragmentation and disunity within man, distorting the reflection of the eternal reasons. The water has to once again become still and whole so that the obscuring of the image dissipates. This is accomplished through yoga.

When the water is settled and calm, then states of concentration, meditation and contemplation can occur. Meditation allows the mind to perceive the immutable *logoi* within all of creation. After meditation, it is in contemplation that one enters into communion with the divine. It is through this contemplation that man obtains wisdom because he is actively aware and involved in his cognitive participation with the divine. He apprehends the eternal reasons that illumine his mind and so, like with Hindu Yoga, he does not look with his own eyes when he views creation, but with the eyes of the divine. This stilling of the mind in of itself, however, does not lead to wisdom unless one also fosters moral perfection within him or herself.

The cultivation of virtues within oneself can also be akin to water. One may question already how water can be used as a symbol of *cultivation* when it is used as a symbol of passivity within the context of this paper. I respond that any conscious act requires both an *active* and *reflective* principle. While water predominantly symbolizes a passive, reflective principle, it should not be presumed that because of this it cannot be used as a symbol of moral cultivation, as I will show in the following paragraphs.

When man's spirit is calm, undisturbed by personal passions and desires, it will be able to clearly reflect the active Spirit within man so that he can comprehend "whence it comes and whither it goes."[22] When water clearly reflects the Spirit, it then becomes the divine Breath:

> Reintegrated consciousness must be born of Water and Spirit, after water has once again become Virginal and Spirit once again become divine Breath or Holy Spirit.[23]

It is at the point when this unification between the Breath and Water occurs that man's consciousness is reborn into its original state before the Fall.[24] How can man be reborn into his original state before the Fall? When one is still enough to reflect the divine Breath, man becomes aligned with the divine will and better able to make decisions that lead to moral perfection. This is fulfilled *in* and *through* the body, for it is not liberation from one's body but through one's body. The person becomes whole again when his being becomes like water, being unified with and reflecting the divine Breath. This is Christian Yoga.

5. The Symbol of Water versus the Mirror

Now one may wonder why I had decided upon using the symbol of water instead of Bonaventure's symbol of the mirror, for both are accurate in portraying the illumination of the eternal reasons on man's mind and the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtues. What does the symbol of water have to illustrate that the symbol of the mirror cannot? To this I reply that the discrepancy between the symbol of water and the mirror is due to the area of emphasis.

The symbol of the mirror is insufficient in symbolizing the process of human awareness of the eternal reasons. A mirror, while it is accurate in depicting how the mind of man is illuminated, it cannot portray the different states of the mind, i.e., whether it is stilled or distracted, disturbed or quieted because the mirror remains the same in all states. It assumes that man's mind has a static nature and, therefore, cannot accurately reflect its dynamism.

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[22] Anonymous, *Meditations on the Tarot*, 30.

[23] Anonymous, *Meditations on the Tarot*, 30.

[24] For, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." John 3:5.

While the symbol of water is sufficient in explicating the mind's path to consciousness of the eternal reasons and in cultivating intellectual virtue, I believe, however, that it is deficient in the area of adequately illustrating the development of moral virtue. I think that the act of polishing a mirror is better suited to describe this particular process because it stresses the *act* of fostering moral perfection by removing imperfections like dust or rust from the mirror. In other modes of thought, including Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, the symbol of the mirror is used to describe the process of moral perfection because of this physical act of removing dust and rust, which is symbolic of moral imperfection.[25] It would be valuable then in future research to delve into the strengths and weaknesses of both symbols as they pertain to Bonaventure.

Now, this also poses a deficiency that is in both symbols, namely, that neither of them can solely convey the entire process of attaining wisdom. They can illuminate specific areas within the idea, however, they also cast shadows upon other areas. It would be erroneous, therefore, for either symbol to be dismissed or diminished in value in light of the other. Explaining symbolism and its significance in philosophy would be another area of future research since it is crucial in understanding ideas like Bonaventure's Illumination theory.

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[25] Gail Eaton, in his article "Perfecting the Mirror," explains how Islam uses the mirror as a symbol for the heart, and how the mirror continually needs to be polished in order to foster moral perfection. This, however, is not restricted to solely Islam as I have stated above.

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HUMAN PERSON IN EXPERIMENTATION

Ethical Issues and Concerns

Sanjyot D. Pai Vernekar◆

1. Introduction

Advances in biomedical science and technology and their applications in the practice of medicine are a cause of anxiety among the public at large. The society is confronted with a number of ethical problems due to the abuses committed in scientific investigation and biomedical research. The methodology of biomedical research is itself a cause of concern and fear for the society at large. The researchers test their hypotheses by experimenting on animals. However, to be clinically useful, experiments must be performed on human persons and this entails some risk to the subjects. Although biomedical research may cause some risk to its subjects, it is said to be largely beneficial to the subjects as well as the society at large.

'Research' means an inquiry or examination or a critical and exhaustive investigation or experimentation which aims at discovering and interpreting new facts. However, 'biomedical research' refers to health-related research which aims at the advancement of the goals of medicine. While defining research, the Declaration of Helsinki reads as follows: "The purpose of biomedical research involving human subjects must be to improve diagnostic, therapeutic and prophylactic procedures and the understanding of the etiology and pathogenesis of disease…"[1]

Concern for the interests and wellbeing of the human person must always prevail over the interest of science and society. The physician can conduct research with the aim of acquiring new medical knowledge only to the extent that medical research is justified by its potential diagnostic or therapeutic value for the patient. The physicians who engage in research projects involving human persons should take care to see that the hazards involved do not outweigh the potential benefits.

The history of human experimentation is as old as that of medicine itself: "… man is an inveterate experimenter, and man has been the chief

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[1] Dianne N. Irving, "Biomedical Research with 'Decisionally Incapacitated' Human Subjects: Legalization of a Defunct Normative Bioethics Theory," www.all.org.

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experimental animal both as experimenter and as subject."[2] The central fact of any human experimentation is that one person is being used as a means for the benefit of others. This poses an ethical dilemma. It is necessary to distinguish between beneficial experimentation and non-beneficial experimentation. Beneficial or therapeutic experimentation is that which benefits the human subjects. However, non-beneficial experimentation aims at the advancement of knowledge and not improving the subject's condition. Experimentation enables medicine to yield better means of preventing illness, diagnosing diseases and therapy. However, the "do not harm" rule should be followed when the human person is made a subject of the experiment.

2. Basic Requirements for Experimentation Involving Human Persons

There are three basic requirements for experimentation.[3] Firstly, experiments should be conducted on non-humans, namely, animals. It is only later on that the research can be conducted on human persons, provided the required conditions like taking informed consent, etc., are met. Secondly, the experiment should involve proper scientific and medical procedures. Thirdly, the experiment should be undertaken by scientifically qualified persons.

Besides these scientific requirements, certain ethical requirements must also be met. Firstly, an assessment has to be done of the foreseeable risks as well as benefits to the human persons and the society at large and science itself. It must be seen that the benefits outweigh the risks. The most important requisite of experimentation is that the voluntary and informed consent of the person subjected to research must be obtained. Research activity requires that there should be a healthy relationship between the investigator/researcher and the participant/subject. The National Committee for Ethics in Social Science Research in Health (NCESSRH), India, has succinctly put it: "Participants should be seen as indispensable and worthy partners in research."[4]

Paul M. McNeill points out that the "history of unethical experimentation is an appalling account of 'man's inhumanity to man'.

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[2] Gert H. Brieger, "Human Experimentation: History," in Warren T. Reich, ed., *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, New York: The Free Press, 1978, 2:684.

[3] Alexander M. Capron, "Human Experimentation: Basic Issues," *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, 2:696.

[4] Amar Jesani and Tejal Barai-Jaitly, eds., *Ethics in Health Research: A Social Science Perspective*, Mumbai: Centre for Studies in Ethics and Rights, 2005, 44.

One of the commonalities across many of the experiments … is an attitude of superiority in the experimenters towards their human subjects."[5] It is mostly the socially powerless and disadvantaged who are subjected to unethical research. Besides the superiority element, the researchers are indifferent to the risk of harm or deliberate infliction of harm on others. In this context, Macfarlane Burnet holds that "any group of men directly concerned in the success of an enterprise will be inclined to minimize the danger and to resent any safety precautions which will impede the enterprise."[6] In the context of research, the outcome of the project is more important than the risks of harm to the lives of the persons involved. The scientists should not be allowed to conduct experiments on human persons without adequate protective measures.

3. Ethical Principles of Human Experimentation

As per the Belmont Report, all research involving human subjects should be conducted in accordance with three basic ethical principles, namely, respect for person, beneficence, and justice. "Respect for persons ... incorporates at least two basic ethical convictions: first, that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents and, second, that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection."[7] In practice, the respect for autonomy translates into the requirement of informed consent. In order to respect research subjects as persons, investigators must obtain their informed consent. Those who are dependent or vulnerable must be given security against harm or abuse. For example, children lack maturity and independence and, hence, are not regarded as autonomous. Sometimes an injury or illness may reduce one's capacity to make autonomous decisions. Hence in such cases, the subjects should be given protection.

The second principle of research ethics identified by the Belmont Report is the principle of beneficence. This principle gives rise to two obligations: 1) Non–malfeasance or do not harm. Non–malfeasance extends beyond physical harm to include protection from psychological, social, and economic harm. 2) Beneficence or maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms. The investigators should prevent harm, remove harm and promote good.

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[5] Paul M. McNeill, *The Ethics and Politics of Human Experimentation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 35.

[6] McNeill, *The Ethics and Politics of Human Experimentation*, 36.

[7] P. Boleyn-Fitzgerald., "Experimentation on Human Subjects," in F. G. Frey and C. H. Wellman, eds., *A Companion to Applied Ethics*, London: Blackwell, 2003, 413.

The final principle is the principle of justice. Justice refers to the ethical obligation to treat each person in accordance with what is morally right and proper, to give each person what is due to him or her. In the context of research, this principle refers to distributive justice, which requires the equitable distribution of both the burdens and benefits of participation in research. As justice is "rooted in ideas of 'fairness and desert', people should be treated fairly and disinterestedly, and should be given what they deserve in the sense of what they have earned."[8] The primary application of the principle of justice to human experimentation has been in the area of subject selection. Historically, human experimentation has drawn people from socially and economically disadvantaged background. The abuses of patients have occurred mostly among the poorer patients with low status. The selection of subjects should be fair both to individuals and to the classes in society. As a principle of social justice, there should be preference for using some classes ahead of others. For example, in most cases adults should be used as subjects of research rather than children. Prisoners and mentally infirm persons should be avoided as subjects of research. They could be involved in research only if the research is directly related to their conditions or there are no alternative people who could serve as subjects.

These three principles outlined in the Belmont Report provide a framework for resolving ethical issues. These principles are incorporated in government regulations, professional codes and theoretical models. These principles were significant in terms of protection of the human subject. Respect for persons focused on informed consent so that individuals are protected from coercion, fraud, etc. Beneficence protects individuals from unwarranted risks. Justice focuses on protection of persons from exploitation. These principles constitute a protective ethic and help in preventing the abuses perpetrated in the name of scientific advancement.

4. Significance of Informed Consent

For all types of biomedical research involving human persons, one of the most basic requirements is to obtain the informed consent of the prospective human subject or, in case the human person is not capable of giving informed consent, the proxy consent of a properly authorized representative. 'Informed consent' is treated as "infallible dogma in biomedical research ethics."[9] It is the consent given by a competent individual after receiving the relevant information from the researcher. He should have understood the information and then arrived at a decision to participate in the research out of his own free will and not due to any coercion or influence or inducement.

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[8] McNeill, *The Ethics and Politics of Human Experimentation*, 148-9.

The foremost grounding for seeking consent is the ethical principle, "respect for persons." Informed consent protects the person's freedom of choice and respects his autonomy. This principle ensures that the person is treated as an 'end' and not as a means to another's end. The requirement for seeking consent also has a religious basis. The Judeo-Christian tradition affirms that "each human life is a gift from God and is of infinite and immeasurable worth... The infinite worth of the individual requires that persons treat each other with respect and not interfere in each others lives without consent."[10]

Consent obtained by the researcher is valid only if (1) the person is competent to consent, (2) the consent is not under coercion, and (3) the consent should be informed, namely, the person who is the subject of research should be provided with the relevant information about the research to be conducted and this information has to be understood by the subject before giving his consent. Consent may be indicated in a number of ways. The consent could be expressed orally or in writing, that is by signing a consent form. As a general rule, the person should sign a consent form or, in case he is incompetent to do so, by a legal guardian or other duly authorized representative.

Before obtaining the person's consent to participate in research the researchers should provide the subject or person with the following information either verbally or in writing in the language that he or she is capable of understanding:

(1) The goal and objective of research should be explained.
(2) Names and addresses of researchers, institutions and the main person of the ethics committees / ethical review board should be provided.
(3) Reasons or methods for selecting the particular locality or community or individual or groups for participating in the research must be revealed.

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[9] Justine Burley and John Harris, eds., *A Companion to Genethics*, New York: Blackwell, 2002, 83.

[10] Karen Lebacqz and Robert J. Levine, "Informed Consent in Human Research: Ethical and Legal Aspects," *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, 2:756.

(4) The possible, anticipated, and potential benefits or harms (direct/indirect, immediate/long term) of research must be explained.

(5) There must be commitment to maintain privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the data obtained from the subjects.

(6) The future possible use of the information and data obtained, like using as a database or recordings for educational purposes, should be made known to the human subjects. However, such use should be anonymous so that the privacy and confidentiality could be maintained.

(7) Persons should also be informed of their right to decline in participating in the research or to withdraw consent at any stage of the research.

(8) The subject and subject's family should be informed whether there will be compensation for any disability or death or injury arising in the process of research.

In some specific situations and research issues, it is not practically possible to carry out research if all the details are revealed to the subjects. If all the details are revealed, there may be difficulties in assessing participants, possibility of affecting change in behaviour or responses of the participants. Hence, it may not be possible to reveal all the information mentioned earlier. In such cases, the following should be done: (1) A detailed justification for not revealing all the information must be provided in the research proposal which has to be reviewed by the peers and ethical committees. (2) The subject's right to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality must be safeguarded in such cases, as they do not know fully the real purpose for which they are providing the information. (3) Though it may be accepted that some information may not be revealed, the rest of the information should be provided particularly with respect to the physical risks, discomfort, or unpleasant emotional experiences that the subject could face.

The informed consent procedure is, however, significant as it helps in promoting individual autonomy, encourage rational decision making, avoid fraud and duress, involve the public and encourage self scrutiny by the researcher as well as reduce the civil and criminal liability of the researcher and his or her institution. Informed consent safeguards the rights and welfare of the persons. By obtaining informed consent, the subjects "are not being 'used' but instead they… become 'co-adventurers'. The consent requirement, thus, affirms a basic covenantal bond between the researcher and the human subject and ensures respect for the subject as an end, not merely a means."[11] The ideal human subjects, therefore, are themselves researchers.

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[11] Lebacqz and Levine, "Informed Consent in Human Research," 756.

Though informed consent is very significant, there are certain class of people like children who are incapable to give their consent. In case research is to be conducted with children as subjects, then proxy consent must be obtained from the parents/guardians; further, in the case of mentally ill persons who are not competent of consenting, consent should be obtained from the person who is the guardian or next friend or like. There are also unconscious, semi-conscious or critically ill patients from whom or on whose behalf consent cannot be obtained for treatment or research.

5. Guidelines Laid Down by Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) for Conduct of Research with Human Persons

Ethical guidelines on biomedical research involving human persons were finalized by ICMR in 2000. The general principles, as stated in the document, are that the research must be essential; voluntary and informed consent must be obtained from the person or subject of research. Participants should not be exploited, their privacy must be respected. The risks involved in the research should be minimized. The researchers should be well qualified and competent. These guidelines, however, do not refer to the gender and class inequalities prevalent in India. These guidelines are devoted to ethics of research in genetic testing, organ transplantation and assisted reproductive technology, though there is very little original research in these areas. On the other hand, the frequently researched areas like use of drugs and vaccines are not given much importance. The guidelines do not directly address laboratory based research that makes use of established drugs or procedures, as well as invasive and possibly risky procedures. The codes whether at the national or international level are not sufficient to safeguard research subjects and ensure ethical experimentation. There needs to be some mechanisms for ensuring that the rules stated in codes are adhered to.

In India, it is recommended that the ethics committee should include clinicians experienced in clinical research, an expert on drugs, one or two non-medical persons who could provide guidance to the committee in the matter of ethics and law. These non-medical persons could be a lawyer or a judge. The committees should consist of five to seven members who should meet at least once in every three months. A research ethics committee of one of the research institutes, namely, All India Institute of Medical Sciences considers between forty to fifty research proposals every year. The committee functions in a similar manner as in other countries wherein the research proposals are reviewed by the members and, subsequently, meetings are held to discuss these proposals. If necessary, the researchers are asked to defend their proposals. There are approximately one hundred institutional ethical committees throughout India. However, these ethics committees function poorly. The committee members do not have training, time or interest to fulfil their responsibilities. The proceedings of committee meetings are kept confidential preventing transparency in functioning. As per the ICMR, many of its affiliated institutions do not have active ethics committees and the ICMR also does not have the infrastructure necessary to monitor their functioning.

Amar Jesani and Tejal Barai-Jaitly[12] have mentioned that the researchers, before taking up any research involving human beings, should ask themselves whether the research is necessary and relevant to the community being studied, whether the researcher is qualified and competent to undertake the research, what are the risks which the subjects may face in course of the research, whether informed and voluntary consent from the subject is obtained. In India, it is found that researchers do not give significance to these issues. Reflection on ethical issues involved in medical research involving human beings is not of serious concern to the researchers. Obtaining informed consent is not given importance. Though informed consent is crucial in research it becomes difficult to obtain informed consent from the poor either because of the literacy level or because they become vulnerable to the need for healthcare. Researchers also do not respect the person's right to privacy and confidentiality. Sometimes in medical conferences and seminars, confidential information is revealed, thus, violating the subjects' right to privacy. Any researcher ought to have follow-up of participants. But it is found that, in India, the researchers do not maintain long term contact with participants. Many times poor Indians cannot benefit from the results of the research undertaken. For example, they cannot afford the drugs being tested on them.

6. Ethical Issues Involved in Human Experimentation

Medical research, which typically begins in a test tube or petri dish, moves on to animal testing, and, eventually, ends in human experimentation. Medicine requires constant experimental inputs to solve problems and make progress. Most experiments are thoughtfully designed and most researchers desire to do good to the experimental subject. However, during the past century, serious abuses of subjects have taken place. In this context, it is important that researchers who help in the advancement of medical knowledge should be aware of ethical issues involved in research with human persons.

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[12] Amar Jesani and Tejal Barai-Jaitly, eds., *Ethics in Health Research: A Social Science Perspective*, Mumbai: Centre for Studies in Ethics and Rights, 2005, 77-87.

One of the ethically important issues in research is informed consent. The significant question is whether research is unethical in all those cases where consent cannot be obtained. Before answering this question, it is pertinent to see why informed consent is essential in research. Informed consent protects the rights of the human persons and prevents the researchers from using them as pure means to further their own ends.

The basic concern of medical practice was to protect the person and promote his wellbeing regardless of all implications. Biomedical research, however, developed interests sometimes contrary to the medical practice and at times the interest of advancement of medical knowledge at all cost became the credo. Under these conditions physicians involved in biomedicine began to regard patients as 'guinea pigs'. Whether it is Nuremberg Declaration or Helsinki Declaration, the main objective of such documents was to ensure that no exploitation of patients is carried out in the name of experimentation. Even if experimentation is deemed necessary, then informed consent is to be procured. Legislation controlling research and experimentation and institutionalisation of controlling bodies came into existence to ensure that the fundamental objective of medical profession is upheld.

Medicine today is an enterprise pursued by physicians and researchers who develop only transient and temporary relationship with the experimental subjects. It is in this context that patient autonomy and informed consent are seen as 'antidotes' to arrogant researchers and necessary mechanisms for protecting the rights and freedom of the human persons.

While it is argued that persons who are experimental subjects have freedom to participate or not to participate in research, the question whether this freedom is respected in medical research has been debated. In biomedical research this freedom has been threatened and subjects are compelled to assert the freedom as freedom from interference legitimized by informed consent. The researcher is aware of the fact that any research does involve certain risks. As such the researchers in their own interest and for the sake of the human subjects should inform the subjects about the pros and cons of research. In view of negligence and malpractices in biomedical research, a dire need is felt to protect the human person.

However, in spite of this, consent in the fully informed sense may not always be obtainable. The researcher knows that if the person is always fully informed he may not agree to participate in the research for the sake of the advancement of medical knowledge. If the risks and hazards to the human persons are not very serious and life threatening, then the informed consent need not be obtained. However, this decision should not be left to the individual researcher alone but be decided by a body such as ethical research committee or the like.

Another issue of moral concern is when experimentation is conducted on human beings by giving them financial benefits or payment. Many times the persons or subjects who are exploited are from the lower socio-economic strata. It is these subjects who due to financial crisis agree to participate in the research. It is unethical that medical research which should be carried out for the highest and purest motives is using money to lure people to participate in experiments.

The defenders of the medical research activity hold that experimentation is necessary for the progress of medicine. They argue that the subjects participate in the research of their own free will and even give their consent in writing. They add that the experiments conducted on these human subjects are first conducted on animals. Hence, the actual and possible effects and consequences are known and tested on living creatures.

However, in spite of these arguments, experimentation where human subjects are paid does exhibit a number of morally objectionable features and is, thus, criticized as being unethical. Most of the human subjects are from the economically backward section; hence, the responsibility of medical research and human welfare is not being evenly shared among the people at large. A large section of the society is not involved in the experimentation. Thus, a few persons face the hardships and consequences for the benefit of the society as a whole.

7. **Conclusion**

Though medicine needs to progress, human person needs protection and care. The researcher should see to it that while discharging his obligation to medical research and human health, the human subject is not exploited and harmed. Research should be conducted on ethical grounds so that the adventure of experimentation becomes a joint venture characterised not by arrogance and domination but respectful co-operation.

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Survey

NEURO-TECHNOLOGY AND COUNSELLING

Thomas Parayil[◆]

1. Introduction

Neuro-technology is an emerging field that is opening up a wide range of new possibilities and devices to treat nervous system disorders. Basically, neuro-technology involves the application of electronics and engineering to the human nervous system. Neuro-technology encompasses the application of micro-fabricated devices to achieve direct contact with the electrically active cells of the nervous system (neurons). Already used for some basic research in neuroscience, the technology is also being developed for applications in neuro-prosthetics.

Counselling and neuro-technology are closely associated with each other and are aligned for better therapeutic outcome. It is believed that counselling existed since the commencement of human civilization. Human beings have sought comfort and help from their close associates, besides the kith and kin. Counselling, as a separate therapeutic science, is a product of the 1960's. Although there had been various moves from the 18th century onwards the major breakthrough in counselling came from Carl Rogers in 1942, with his famous book *Counselling and Psychotherapy*. However, research and development in different areas of neuro-technology have contributed a lot in the counselling setting today. The advances in neuro-technology give us powerful new tools to study the brain, and many of these same technologies provide new therapeutic opportunities which are central to counselling.[1]

Tens of thousands have already received neural interface technologies to successfully treat symptoms of epilepsy and Parkinson's disease. While systems that sense neural signals are in early stages of development, they promise to provide a means to restore independence, communication, and, potentially, movement. Current use of technology within the actual process of conducting therapy centres around three

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[1] Lawson Matt, *Entering Cyberspace at the Millennium Dome*, New York: Orion Books Ltd., 2000, 220-228.

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distinct areas, such as Online Text Therapy (e-mail and Internet Relay Chat), Video/Telephone Therapy, and Stand Alone CD-ROM software. The concept of using innovative technologies for mental health has been forthcoming since it became apparent that clients are not only willing to use technology to gain therapy services but in many cases actually prefer it.[2] Development of sophisticated computer generated representations of the self is the work of BTExact's Radical Multimedia Lab, and their application in therapy has been developed in conjunction with Online Counsellors. There are four distinct areas of development in progress, based on the premise that some clients find the idea of anonymous, safe, comfortable and readily available service provision empowering and preferable to traditional (usually face-to-face) therapy.

Neural interface systems have the potential to significantly modify the lives of individuals with paralysis. The multi-electrode sensor itself appears to provide a sensitive means to monitor neural functions; in this connection, it is found that it could be useful in a range of other neurological conditions as well.

The use of natural language scripts provides a mental health information service that creates a realistic question and answer session that appears to be a dialogue between two people, when, in fact, the client is interacting with a piece of software. The creation of an electronic version of the head and face of a therapist – an *avatar*[3] – combines the positive "distancing" aspect of the relationship so that clients can easily access an online therapist. The representation of a human being facilitates a more open therapeutic relationship, working towards the client's mental wellbeing while bypassing the usual constraints of a face-to-face relationship (either the physical bias or having to look at someone in the eye while revealing sensitive material). Full-body *avatar*s, whether actual representations of the person or not, can mean that groups can meet from anywhere in the world and hold a session in complete anonymity and genuine safety. Putting these *avatar*s into specific relaxing environments, we can lose the impersonal waiting room or austere consulting room altogether.

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[2] Anthony K., "Counselling in Cyberspace," *Counselling Journal* 11, 10 (December 2000), 625-627.

[3] The word '*avatar*', originally a Sanskrit term, means "a deity in visible earthly form." In science fiction, the word has been used to mean the visible representation of a human being, appearing in a computer generated world.

2. *Avatars*

The word *avatar* has been applied in the IT industry with the same definition: "A graphical representation of a human being in a computer graphical environment." *Avatar*s come in many shapes and forms and in the past their appearance has been limited by the graphical processing power of computer technology.

The explosive growth of widely available PC graphics power in recent years has led to the current state of the art in *avatar* technology called photorealism.[4] This is the ability to create *avatar*s that have the same "on screen" appearance as the physical appearance of a real human being. These are usually created using 3D graphics and can be a representation of the head only, head and shoulders, upper body or full body of the human subject upon which it is based.

3. Natural Language Scripts and Knowledge Database

In order to interact effectively with the client, the therapist *avatar* will need two parts to its "virtual intelligence."[5] The first part is a large store of information on the issues the client is likely to discuss, how those issues relate to each other and to the client, and what are the sensible and correct responses to those issues might be. We call this a knowledge database, which is the sum of the avatar's understanding in the required topic areas. The second part of the "virtual intelligence" is the ability of the *avatar* to communicate meaningfully with the client. Most importantly, this is the ability to understand the client's questions and comments and, then, to structure and deliver a meaningful response.

The larger and more in-depth the information store on the required topics, the more informed the *avatar* will be and the more capable it will be in providing a useful and effective response to the client. By tightly defining the topics to be covered but providing great depth of information and linkage between the pieces of information, it is possible for the *avatar* to give very intelligent responses to the client.

4. Natural Language Engine

A natural language engine is a powerful tool. Not only does it understand the individual words being provided by the client (in spoken or text format) but it also understands the context of the words, how they relate to each other and the implication of those words when placed in that particular order. A simple example would be as follows: The client opens the discussion with the following comment: "I feel really down about what has happened." It is OK for a speech recognition application to detect these words and perhaps even provide their individual meanings but that is not enough information for the *avatar* to be able to help the client.[6] For example, the natural language engine goes much further than this. It is able to understand that the client is having a strong feeling of depression or gloom and that this feeling has been caused by some yet to be defined event ("what has happened").

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[4] Anthony, "Counselling in Cyberspace," 625-627.

[5] Anthony, "Counselling in Cyberspace," 635-640.

5. *Avatar* in Group

It is possible to take the *avatar* technology one stage further by representing the client as an *avatar* along with the counsellor and visualizing both from a third-person perspective in a virtual environment. In this context, any number of client *avatar*s can be placed together in the virtual environment and be controlled in real time by the clients from their remote workstations. This allows us to create a virtual group therapy experience in the same way in which a virtual business conference might occur. Interaction between the participants can be through a number of methods. A few of such methods are: (1) Text chats where the *avatar*s provide a spatial and more realistic visual connection with the other participants. (2) Voice conference call where each avatar's lip movements are synchronized to that of the participant it represents. (3) Animation can be applied to the *avatar*s through tracking the body movements of the clients at their desk by using simple screen top video cameras and applying the movement data to the *avatar*s. Similarly, facial expression can be given to the *avatar*s by tracking the facial expression of the client at their desktop.[7] (4) Alternatively, where video tracking facilities are not available, animation and facial expression can be triggered by the clients pressing pre-programmed hot keys on their keyboard or by using the text emoticons commonly used in SMS format.

There are many areas of research within these concepts that need to be explored and examined, from a theoretical, practical and, of course, ethical points of view. This is an innovative use of technology at its best –

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[6] Anthony, "Counselling in Cyberspace," 650-655.

[7] Anthony, "Counselling in Cyberspace," 670-675.

the combination of computer technology with the human soul, previously satirized by society as at best impossible and at worst a danger.[8]

6. Advantages and Disadvantages

Recent technology, based on published scientific research, has allowed us to '*see*' into the brain and assess problems that were previously '*invisible*'. We find that many patients are incorrectly diagnosed when symptoms or behaviours are confused with similar problems. By accurately and objectively evaluating the brain's neurophysiology, we are more precise in our interventions and obtain better results – often without medication.

In addition, the advantages of using *Avatar*s for online and automated therapy are many. *Avatar* Therapy provides a more intuitive and human interface than the current purely text-based systems. Clients who are restricted by geography have instant access to specialists. Think of a place in cyberspace where clients can select their counsellors from a range of *Avatar*s, an image that they can relate to completely by gender, colour, and appeal. The human soul behind the *Avatar* is real – the physical representation need not be. Add a virtual environment that has no physical restrictions on any level – not even being bound to the Planet Earth or, indeed, to any reality.[9] Let the client remain anonymous by changing his/her identity through the respective *Avatar* and, then, use that choice of physical representation within the therapeutic work to explore role-play, the identity management, and the client's true perception of the "real self."

Indeed, the technological progress must be put to use in scientific advances supporting physiological and psychological wellbeing of human beings. Technical devices do not, however, substitute the value of face to face work. While the benefits we can derive from taking such positive steps to look at areas of our life that cause any need for concern or anxiety are varied, there are enough indications to be cautious in such moves.

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[8] L. B. Moran, P. F. Durrenberger, N. R. Pearce, and M. B. Graeber, "Two New Molecular Markers of Lewy Bodies in Parkinson's Disease," *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry* 78, 9 (2007), 2-4.

[9] Eliza J. Weizenbaum, "A Computer Program for the Study of Natural Language Communications between Men and Machines," *Communications of the Association for Computing Machinery*, New York: Communications of the ACM, 1966, 36-45.

7. Conclusion

Generally speaking, human beings are equipped to handle various problems they face in and through their loving families and friends. However, it is quite normal to gain support with therapy in a non-judgmental, safe, and confidential manner. Life can be very complex and sometimes friends and families may not be equipped to deal with issues as everyone would like. It is possible that sometimes they are affected on a personal level too. This can cause even more pain and lead to more arguments than necessary as feelings of not being understood, not being truly heard, or even being 'disrespected' can get in the way. In this context, neuro-technology and its use in counselling are essential and appropriate.

Mind science or neuro-technology is all about the way the brain sequences, stores and uses memory, and the chemistry behind the process to create feelings. Online counselling can be our first taste of taking therapy to see how effective this type of therapy can be and to really help us break any limiting beliefs we may have. Limiting beliefs, for example, is one area which can be addressed through this medium of neuro-technology. The signs are positive and, therefore, neuro-technology's application in different areas of counselling intervention is said to be highly prospective. Researches are on and we have a long way to go; indeed, we need to explore further for better therapeutic outcome in the arena of neuro-technology.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds., ***In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem***, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005, pages 223, ISBN: 0-8308-2773-0.

The present work examines the issue whether human sense of self is intelligible on the basis of soul. Dramatic developments in neuroscience seems to suggest that the human brain is the basis for various behaviour characteristics that are unique to the human beings, where 'soul' ceases to be an explanatory construct. Despite such confidence, the mind-body problem generates different alternative explanations due to the persistence of an explanatory gap regarding how physical correlates of a phenomenal state are related to our subjective feelings of that state. The debate, as presented here, tends to revolve around four alternative ways of conceptualizing the mind-body problem. The views presented are from four Christian philosophers, whose concerns also include the bearings that the complexity of these issues has on Christian thinking. An introductory chapter by Joel B. Green, introducing the critical issues at stake, and a final chapter from Stuart L. Palmer, attempting to relate the four positions championed by the contributors to selected Christian practices like hospitality and forgiveness, make up the present 223-page book.

In proposing his substance dualism, Stewart Goetz argues that humans have (or are) souls that are distinct from their physical body. The conclusion that humans have souls is based on an introspective awareness that he/she is a soul. He invokes soul's ability to causally interact with its body to explain human behaviour. Grounded in an awareness of making free choices, he upholds a libertarian free will that can make undetermined choices. Basing on the indivisibility of consciousness, William Hasker, similar to Goetz, postulates two substances to account for human nature. But, in Hasker's view, mind or soul is a new entity coming into being as a consequence of certain configuration and function of the brain. Therefore, this view is emergent dualism. Though mind or soul emerges from the brain, it becomes a substance different from the chemical stuff of which the brain is made. Using emergent dualism he goes beyond the causal closure of physical domain and explains the core requirements of the Christian understanding of the human person, including mind's ability to pursue truth and exercise free agency, and the continuance of the self after the death of the body.

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The non-reductive physicalism of Nancy Murphy proposes that mental processes are determined on brain processes but they are non-reducible to brain processes as a number of characteristics of external world or culture co-determines it. Non-reductive physicalism also argues in favour of the causal autonomy of the mind and saves causal reductionism by the notion of downward causation. Wholes that exist at the higher levels exert a downward causal influence on the parts of which they are composed. Here human nature is accounted for in terms of one substance, but this position escapes the thesis of reductionism. In non-reductive physicalism, the human participation in the world of moral action is the result of their complex neurobiological equipment. The constitution view of persons by Kevin Corcoran upholds the opinion that human persons are constituted by their bodies without being identical with the bodies that constitute them. He argues that the constitution view can better defend the Christian doctrine of resurrection of the dead, as the idea of a body's being numerically the same is at the heart of the doctrine.

While engaging in a controversy regarding the mind-body problem, the contributors explore the composition and construction of the human person. How far have they succeeded? Stuart L. Palmer, in his final chapter remarks that the theories suggested by Goetz, Hasker, Murphy and Corcoran, when confronted with the anthropology embedded in the classical practices of hospitality and forgiveness, require further development along the lines defined by our essential relatedness as human creatures. This limitation seems to be more than a negligence of any particular dimensions of human existence. Historically, human nature has been understood and presented in mythical, philosophical, scientific and religious paradigms, of which the latter two are considered in this work. The contributors, in general, except Nancy Murphy, fail to view the scientific and religious paradigms in a proper perspective.

The limitation in their approach is the result of an assumption that mixing up the scientific and religious paradigms can generate a neat fitting theory. Scientific and religious explanations of human nature are essentially two approaches to human nature. Maybe, neither the scientific approach needs the religious approach, nor vice versa. But, to live life in its fullness, human beings need both the approaches. In holding together both the approaches, attempts like trying to explain the doctrine of resurrection of the dead in a literal sense would not take us very far. As Murphy remarks, in her response to Corcoran, "the language regularly falls short of giving adequate expression to theological realties, and the realm of theology where our language is most inadequate is eschatology, the doctrine of the last things" (188).

Saving the above remark, for those interested in mind-body problem, the book will be an excellent help as it introduces and gives detailed reference to various issues in the field. The writers' own additional publications and other materials cited by them enable the reader to follow the paths of their thinking. The book is presented in such a way that after a writer introduces his or her position, other contributors respond to the view and show how the view is different from theirs, making each position clearer in contrast to other positions. The book makes an honest attempt to engage the fundamental questions about human life provoked in the context of recent developments in neuroscience. It also acknowledges that theology needs to be reformulated by an account of scientific discovery. Such engagements are praiseworthy, as they would make theology and philosophy of religion more relevant for the present generation educated in the naturalized philosophy of the times.

Dolichan K. M.

V. S. George Joseph, *Centrality of Self in Saiva Siddhanta*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2006, pages: 263, ISBN: 81-70863-68-6.

Centrality of Self in Saiva Siddhanta is an important book which offers a different mode of understanding of self in Saiva Siddhanta. He clarifies the concept of human self in Saiva Siddhanta by looking at the text from a philosophical point of view. He gives a graphic picture of both the philosophical content and the sophisticated methodology of Saiva Siddhanta. Thus, this book explores the significant reflections of our ancestors on the existential and essential state of human in order to make a meaningful appraisal of their philosophical reflections and responses to the modern Indian context.

The author highlights the peculiarities of Saiva Siddhanta by referring to various sources in the introduction. There is an effort to see through the existential state of the human with special reference to Sivajnana Mapadiyam of Matava Sivajnanamunivar, an 18th century Tamil commentary on Sivajnanabodham by Meykanda Devar.

The author clarifies the cognitive significance of *podu* and *cirappu* in the first part. According to Siddhantins, *podu* (general) and *cirappu* (special) are two major and qualitatively differing cognitive levels or methods by way of perceiving and realizing the essential nature of the triple realities of *pati-paśu-pāśa*. Sivajnanamunivar is of the opinion that self's spiritual progress starts from reasoning (*podu*) and culminates in the realization of reality (*cirappu*) which is trans-rational.

Second chapter provides a detailed analysis of the self. As God is the permanent revealer of the self, *pati* (Śiva) is knowable partly by the self in *podu* and fully in *cirappu*. It is the self that has the ability to experience both Śiva and the world, for it is the one reality that has the ability to know both *sat* (*pati*) and *asat* (*paśu*). Hence, in Saiva Siddhanta, the self can have in its cognition itself and the other realities too.

Later, the study focuses on the self as an existential being. There are three types of selves in Saiva Siddhanta, and the *sakala*s refer to human beings. Since the *sakala* (self) in the human condition can be considered the highest form of existence by reference to the other beings apart from man or woman. *Sakala*s are selves which are under the great influence of all the three *mala*s (*pāśa*) that is *anava*, *karma*, and *māya*. It also explains the self which goes through three states (*kevala*, *sakala*, and *śuddha*).

Liberation of the self is nothing but realizing the right and lasting relationship of its advaitic union with *pati* and not with *pāśa*. The Saiva Siddhantins believe in the spiritual progress which leads to salvation or liberation. The concept of *guru* who imparts divine wisdom to the self is very relevant in Saiva Siddhanta. They also stress the importance of *Mukti Pancākṣara*, that is, *si-va-ya-na-ma*. Finally, the liberated self attains a state where it becomes Śiva-like.

The book deserves appreciation for its excellent quality of research acumen and easily accessible presentation. Indeed, the author provides enough information regarding Saiva Siddhanta that lets even a beginner understand its philosophical as well as theological implications. The presentation is very captivating and is capable of generating further interest in the Saiva Siddhanta. Of course, this book is a welcome addition to the existing literature on the subject.

Vipin Varghese Vanchipura

Kleetus K. Varghese, *Michelangelo and the Human Dignity*: *An Anthropological Reading of the Sistine Frescoes*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2005, pages 336, ISBN: 81-7086-367-8.

The book *Michelangelo and the Human Dignity* by Kleetus K. Varghese dwells on the anthropological interpretation of the Sistine Frescoes of Michelangelo. In this book, the author describes the works of

Michelangelo as capable of enhancing human dignity.

The book has two parts along with a general introduction. First, he undertakes a detailed study on the human dignity in the basic works of Michelangelo. The second part has two parts: a study on the human dignity in the basic works of Michelangelo and the anthropological reading of the Sistine Chapel. The first part is divided into four chapters, which starts with a biographical note on Michelangelo Buonarroti.

In the first chapter, he gives a brief description of Michelangelo's life. Michelangelo Di Lodovico Buonarroti, the greatest artist of all times, was born in the small town of Carprese in rural Tuscany, Italy on sixth March 1475. Michelangelo receive his first lesson in stone and marble carving from his father Lodivico Buonarroti, who was the local governor. Apart from the biographical details, in this part, the author also deals with Michelangelo's connection with Renaissance period. In fact, the root or foundation of Michelangelo's thought and artistic conception is located in the Renaissance period. In mid-fourteenth century, Italy was engaged in a rediscovery of Plato and Neo Platonism and the revival of stoicism and scepticism. Renaissance period is said to have facilitated the rebirth of literature and devotion to classical learning and style.

The Renaissance period gave more emphasis to dignity of human person: in fact, human person is taken to be the measure of all things. The concept of man is more important and richer than that of the human individual. According to Christian philosophy of that period, reasonable soul is the reason for the dignity of the human person. Renaissance philosophers discuss the vision of the human person based upon the Book of Genesis. Human being, according to the biblical tradition was created in the image and likeness of the God. The renaissance philosophers gave more importance to immortality of the soul, God-man relationship, etc. In the next chapter, the author deals with the different types of works of Michelangelo. The main work of Michelangelo is divided into four categories: sculpture, architecture, paintings, and writings. According to Michelangelo, sculpture is superior among all other arts. In the third chapter, he deals with human dignity in the sculptures of Michelangelo. The main sculptures studied are Madonna Della Scala, Battle of the Centaurs, Santo Spirito crucifix, Hercules, Pietas, Madona, Twin Statues, The Slaves on the Victory, Dying Slaves, Rebellious Slave, Night and Day, Twilight and Dawn, David, St. Mathew, and Moses. Detailed description is given for the most famous and largest work David and Moses. In same chapter, the author deals with the architecture of Michelangelo by studying the tomb of the Julius II, the façade of St. Lorenzo in Florence, the Lorentian library, the Medici chapel in Florence, the Capittolin Piazza and palaces, and the new basilica of St. Peters in Vatican.

In the fourth chapter, he develops and interprets human dignity in the writings of Michelangelo. The writings are divided into two, i.e., family and business. His poetry is about love and death, eternity of ideal beauty and caducity of its earthly manifestations and loss and disappeared desire. In the same chapter, he discusses the dignity of human person in the frescos. His paintings are beautiful and all of them speak about human dignity very loud. In the fifth chapter, he deals with the anthropological readings of the Sistine chapel. The author deals very descriptively about most of his frescoes in the Sistine chapel and his individual paintings. Sixth and seventh chapters survey the Sistine ceiling and last judgment. The eighth and ninth chapters deal with the iconological study of frescoes; they are analyzed by iconological methods. Thus, he sums up the anthropological readings of Sistine chapel in the following words: human being is a creature, created by God; he is created in the image of God. Thus, according to Michelangelo, every human being has the duty to search and reach God.

This book is a product of serious research held by the author for his doctoral dissertation. It contains beautiful photographs of most of Michelangelo's works. It is very useful to artists as well as scholars who are interested to know more about Michelangelo and his works. The book, as a whole, is a helpful tool to know the methods in carving and painting that Michelangelo had adopted. It is, indeed, commendable to note that the book, *Michelangelo and the Human Dignity*, provides a reader with a complete idea both on the person of artist Michelangelo and his masterpieces.

Ajith John Pullokaran

Joseph Pandiappallil, *The Man and the Pearl: A Christological Interpretation of* Puruṣasukta *and the Pearl of St. Ephrem*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007, pages: 187, ISBN: 817086415-1.

The Man and the Pearl is an illuminated book of hours. It gives a Christological interpretation of the *Puruṣasukta* and the "Pearl" (a poem) of St. Ephraim, an Eastern Church Father who is held in high esteem. The book describes about early religion, both Semitic and Indian. It also describes the interaction that had taken place among these religions. In fact, initially, most religions started to interact through trade and so on. The author dwells on the influence of Western Christians and the Syrian Church of Indian in the 17th century. Pandiappallil is bold enough to say that the whole interaction was a big loss for the Indian Christians as a whole.

This book concentrates on analyzing the hymn of *Puruṣasukta* and the Pearl, i.e., two important hymns of Hindu and Christian traditions. He describes various aspects of both these hymns in an elaborate manner. When we go through the systematic treatment, we understand the deep knowledge the author has of both these hymns. He explains different aspects of the *Puruṣasukta*, i.e., concept of the primordial man to the sacrifice. According to him, these hymns are mystical and can be used for the holistic development of human beings. Further, in his treatment about *The Pearl*, the hymns of St. Ephrem, the author concentrates on the "divine man" who is Christ Jesus.

In an attempt to prove that the Aryan and Semitic traditions possess common elements, the author undertakes a detailed analysis. He concludes this analysis with the contention that these traditions are closely related in theological discourses and literary compositions.

In the context of widely prevalent and ongoing fight among various peoples and religions, it is, indeed, the need of the hour that the author has undertaken an analysis of the foundational sources indicating that they share common heritage and shared inner dynamics. The author's contributions are welcome as they highlight the need and techniques to establish religious harmony though scholarly studies. Moreover, this work stands as a testimony to the fact that an integral theological and cultural synthesis is possible between what is generally considered to be 'antagonistic' traditions. May we see more works forthcoming from the author!

Cejo Alappatt

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HOLISTIC ETHICS AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES

Thomas Manickam◆

1. Introduction

The global environmental crisis is fundamentally an ethical problem. It reflects also a crisis in human value system. In the contemporary global situation there are preferential value systems which people of various cultures and ethnic affiliations committed to ancient religious belief systems and practices stick to maintain. The latter component is generally called the *religious ethos,* although it is very much an integral part of an ethnic cultural milieu. Their religious belief systems also have to be seriously taken into account when we discuss finding ways and means to solve some of the human-made environmental crises on a global magnitude. The ethics of modem materialism seems to be a "worship of human pride." Contemporary human communities world over value their own respective gains and take a certain degree of pride and glory of their own technological advancement even on their respective national banners and brand names. In this materialistic perspective of global achievements by certain world powers other things and humans are of value only in as much as they can be somehow used for achieving the targets of such global goal settings. Due to this overemphasis of reaching the competitive global marketing targets we need to acknowledge that our vicious materialistic interests of our ruthless advancement in productivity of industrial goods, we are making the Earth, our homeland and ourselves

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very sickly and neurotic. We need a new ethics that changes our role from being the controller and manipulator of the world to be its friend, servant and partner. In short, we need broaden our ethical vision and norms of application to solve the present day environmental crises from the confines of family and tribe to include nation, race and, finally, humankind. This is what is implied in applying holistic ethics and its integrative norms which take into account the specific religious ethos of various peoples and communities which constitute the so-called "Global Village" where everybody should know and respect each other's ancestral belief systems, values and cultural identity traits which each community honours as its own great heritage. Can we solve our contemporary environmental problems following a set of universally acceptable holistic norms of ethical behaviour? This is the central question here under discussion to which I would like to contribute from my ecological awareness, reflections, and experience gained from my action programs.

2. Ecological and Holistic Ethical Postulates

In this discussion, the ecological postulate is to extend the ethical domain not only to all forms of life but to the environment itself. Eco-centric view of this earth helps us to see life-systems as a web of interdependent unit wholes and, hence, individual organisms are seen and respected as intrinsically beneficial to each other. However, our ecological perspective of Nature as the womb where life takes shape needs to be esteemed holistically. Eco-centrism does not confine our ethical sensibility to an organism as such but extends it to the entire environment. An organism and its environment constitute a continuum. An organism is unintelligible in isolation from its environment; environment is part of its definition. What holistic ethics ultimately implies is to maintain universal kinship and respect towards everything, every form of life-systems, and their life-saving environment as its *sine qua non sitz im Leben,* i.e., indispensable life-sustaining setup.

The foundational holistic ethical postulate is that Nature is a moral order where there is not only struggle for one's own life but also struggle for the life of all, including their protective habitats. The reproductive bio-mechanism is for the preservation of the species. However, any life-system receives in assimilation and gives out in reproduction. There is an aspect of self-sacrifice in reproduction, and it is the universal law of life. According to the Indian Vedic insights, the initial impetus of creation by the Supreme One is said to be *kāma* (love) and that demanded a *yajña* (sacrifice) on the part of the Self-Existent. *Agre kāma asti* – in the beginning there was love (*Ṛgveda* X,129,4). The culmination of creative evolution is also love and its most conspicuous expression is represented in a human mother's giving her own life-sap in the form of breast-milk to her child. This motherly love is the result of a living process of self-sacrifice, rather than an act of simple benevolence. This is typified in the "bio-genetics" of Mother Earth as well. Thus, love must have been ingrained in the Nature's moral order from its origin and the Nature preserves it all through the various stages of her evolution and progress. Hence, there is a moral order in this universe, where love is shared in responsible parentage at varied degrees of its manifestation from lower species to human beings. Any technocratic or mechanistic or industry favouring interference with this rhythm of the moral order of Nature and her life-supporting habitats will lead ultimately into the destruction and extinction of the living organisms in certain areas of our endangered planet, and this destructive process in due course will affect human survival as well. This is the reason why we need think in terms of a holistic ethical dealing with all living organisms in their due linking with all other neighbours and co-habitants of various eco-systems of our homely planet.

Just as beauty attracts and goodness elicits love, the sense of the value of life must generate in us a sense of duty to help the continuity of the life-systems to survive in proper living environments, the most conducive of which is our own human sweet homes, where love blossoms in the most endearing ways of affection, concern, charity, understanding, forgiving and forgetting attitudes towards the individual members. It is at our homes that life-sharing takes place in its most intensity of love (*kāma*) which enables the sharing of generative drives of the couples to give a new life-form, a child. In an analogical manner, we have to respect Nature as our bigger home where all life-systems can co-exist and survive with mutual help and support enabling a harmonious living style for all beings, where human beings take the responsibility of securing the right of existence and survival of all other lower beings. In order to act on this higher human responsibility, we have to apply the norms of holistic ethical attitudes to all creatures, which basically imply the acceptance of each fauna and flora as integral constituents of our planetary habitat which have their right of existence and growth as designed by the Creator. Every living organism is a link in the web of the whole life-system and a constant concern for their safety and security must be the duty (*dharma*) of all those who are on the fast track of industrialization and consequent dangers of degradation of the living environment, pollution, contamination of the life-saving sources of Nature's gifts such as water, air, greeneries, sunshine as well as the inter-space expanse of the universe. We have to bear in mind a broken link, however small it is, that causes damage to the whole web of life system and gives an alarm of a gradual breaking of the whole vital organic structure of our planet.

The anthropocentric ethics, as witnessed in the past, honours only human beings and their income-generating and trading interests while exploiting all other beings to serve this economic target almost exclusively, and not their life-sustaining habitats. This ethical exclusivism makes the humankind blind to Nature and her sublime functions and purposes. The economically motivated industrialists of today consider Nature as a depository of minerals and forestry resources which have to be exploited at all costs for industrial purposes. This exploiting tendency of industrialists stunts humanity because it does not know the genuine human transcendence – an overarching care for humans as well as their life-sustaining environments. Joining hands with many ecologists of today I feel like sensing that human greatness may not show itself anymore in the domination of Nature, but in the capacity to go beyond its egoistic aggressiveness to the maintenance-service of our own home, this planet, the house of God and of humans, as well as of angels and other cosmic guardian spirits.

3. Need of an "Ethics of Sustainable Development"

Environmental ethics is possible only if we can re-evaluate the global economic system. Progress understood in economic and materialistic terms is degrading the environment. The economic growth rate we achieve comes at the cost of extensive environmental damage and high health costs to people and other species. The myth of progress and its industrial assault on the planet amounts to subversion of the evolutionary propensities of the earth. To bring local and global economy within the holistic ecological principles we need to cultivate a taste for right livelihood and general wellbeing. It calls for a counter cultural revolution that will accept a shift of emphasis from material acquisition to inner spiritual growth. It implies bringing back what we have banished from economics, namely, the "ethics of sustainable development." There are ethical challenges before economics such as equity, justice, and the wellbeing of the planetary community.

The challenge before eco-friendly development is to replace growth with sustainable progress. A materialist philosophy of life with an ethics of consumerism motivated by mere profit-oriented market economy does not fit into a system of sustainability in which everyone in this world has to be cared for. The world of limited resources and the idea of unlimited economic expansion are incompatible. In a finite environment, there is no way other than to limit production and consumption if we want to avert the breakdown of Nature's benevolent systems. Human desires are infinite and infinitude can be achieved only in the spiritual realm and never in the material realm. Simpler lifestyle can reduce human impact on the environment; it can also ensure a less violent society.

A planned controlling of excessive consumerism will certainly help maintain Nature's self-regulative capacity. By following some strict eco-friendly regulatory ethical methodology in industrial productivity we contribute towards enduring economic progress for the benefit of all the inhabitants of our planet. Thinking along the vision of Mahatma Gandhi, regarding the use of our resources for the "needs of humans and not for their greed," we may have to promote productivity to meet the basic needs of the larger low income sections of our nation in contrast to satisfying the greed of a few multinational business magnets and monopoly holders. This preferential option on the national planning schemes would be give rise to a good economic planning on the right line of sustainable development and growth in the productivity lines of our nation. Thus, sparing and conserving the Nature's resources also for our future generations, while not consuming the whole of Nature's blessings by our own present generations, will be a great gesture of generosity on our part, shown towards the future of humankind; such reserving of our resources for the future of our generation will ensure sustainable development; this is one of the pivotal points of holistic eco-friendly ethics which will promote our nation's sustainable economic development.

4. Eco-Holism: A New Configuration for Environmental Management

"Eco-holism" is a new configuration for environment management and happy life; it also provides a new way of solving problems created by ecological exploitations and disasters. It is a process of integrating all '*holons*' – 'unit wholes' – in the spectrum of the wholeness or totality of a system, and viewing the whole as expectantly anticipated in each unit-whole. It is like viewing our whole body as one configuration of a number of units or parts, each of which is complete in itself but incomplete without its relatedness to the whole body-configuration. It is also like the symbol of "the wine and its branches" (Jn. 15:4-6) used by Jesus Christ to explain the dynamics of the Christian life to be lived in close intimacy and communion with Jesus, the main trunk of the wine, in view of achieving maximum effectiveness in the activities of his disciples. This is generally known as the holistic vision of life lived in inter-connectivity with the mainline source of life, the life divine passing through the main trunk as well as transfused into all braches equally and proportionately for the healthy survival and productivity of the wine as visualized by Jesus in his parable. Eco-holistic vision of life, therefore, is fundamentally a new configuration of all components of Natural resources used for sustainable development and healthy management of production lines.

In viewing the totality of a system, no part is to be taken as a disconnected or discrete entity but as an integral unit contributing its own specific elements towards the building up of the whole system, whatever it is. Every unit in itself is a 'unit-whole' (*holon*), defining itself having a role to play of its own, while contributing towards the total function of the total system as one organic whole. In other words, it is equal to say that we all need our own specific holistic visions of realities and their related issues in order to propose correct remedial steps in solving the problems arising from actual situations of human life which is connected to the life-systems of numerous other fellow beings and creatures. This is called a holistic ethical approach to realities and their problem solutions both for their building up and for their reparatory works, when systems fail to function, and when one or the other component gets damaged or worn out.

The holistic vision of life is very much foundational in our Indian religious ethos and culture, consisting of *Darśanas* (philosophical insights), *Brahmajijñāsa* (theological investigations), and *Yoga Sādhanas* (ways of spirituality). Viewing anything in its wholeness first and, then, going to its details to realize the wholeness of what is perceived and heard is the Indian method of knowledge described in a graded ascendency as *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana* (i.e., listening-perception, reflection, and realization). This is what is generally known as 'totality perception'. Certain qualifications, like *pūrṇam* (fullness), *samanvayam* (integral), *samagram* (whole), *samuchayam* (harmonious), etc., are characteristically holistic expressions in Indian managerial ethics; in fact, they were applied right from the time of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* and Manu's *Dharmaśāstra*. They have to be applied as relevant in eco-holistic ethics to make sense for an integral approach to productivity and progress.

This holistic vision of life and its application for solving life-related problems holistically is more effectively used in theoretical sciences, especially in the areas of life-sciences such as *Āyurveda* and such other natural medical sciences which are integrally connected to the supporting bio-systems of Nature, where it is known as 'holistic medicine' and 'holistic treatment'. In psychological and neurological sciences, it is called 'holistic counselling', which is now-a-days applied for treating mentally challenged patients.

There are 'holistic approaches' proposed to solve the problems affecting persons and their interactions in managerial settings. Such approaches finally succeed in solving problems with amazing results even in the personnel management of big firms and companies. Holistic inspirational thoughts such as "Human beings are here, handle with care," "Give respect, take respect," "I feel confident since you are here," etc., are commonly seen fixed on the entrance of conference halls and council rooms of management establishments.

Every approach holistically conceived has an organic and network co-ordination as that of our human body, by targeting a unified common function to realize the benefit of the whole body as its common good, while the particular functions of each and all parts of the same system are co-ordinated keeping the function of each organ as important as that of the whole body, and as integral as every other organ or unit of the whole system. Therefore, neglect of even apparently insignificant part of the body is unacceptable when the total functioning of the whole body is considered important for the wellbeing of the whole system. It is said that the strength of a chain rests on its weakest link. Hence, in a holistic approach to solving problems of any system, much care and precaution should be taken to save the weakest links, persons or incidents as the case may be, apparently unnoticed by uncritical minds in the management of persons and projects.

5. Holistic Ethical Values for Happy Life

Ecologists, like Ken Wilber, discover three types of values in Nature which if holistically coordinated contribute much to make our life happier than otherwise. They are: (1) *ground value*, (2) *intrinsic value*, and (3) *extrinsic* *value*. Accordingly, all '*holons*' (everything is a '*holon*' as it is part and whole at the same time), as they are manifestations or expressions of the whole system, have ground value. Inasmuch as all things participate in the interconnected whole as parts of the whole they possess a ground value. Besides being a part, every *holon* has its own relative wholeness or depth and so possesses an intrinsic value. Its depth is valuable as it incorporates and enfolds aspects of the whole cosmos. Both an atom and an ape, as manifestations of the Cosmic Spirit, have equal ground value but as both differ in depth wholeness also differ in intrinsic value. Every *holon* is part of some other *holon* and, hence, it has extrinsic or instrumental value, i.e., value for others. Atoms have lot of instrumental value as they are constituent parts of so many wholes. As every *holon* is a whole/part, intrinsic value and extrinsic value are twin aspects of the same reality.

In a sequence of increasing complexity, the higher structures transcend the lower but include aspects of the lower. The higher depends on the lower, though the former transcends the latter in its depth dimension. If the molecules are destroyed, then cells and organisms are destroyed. The destruction of the physiosphere means the destruction of the biosphere as well. This interconnection or interrelationship means that everything has its place, relevance, and value. Wilber's environmental ethics flows from the fact of transcendence and inclusion. Wilber says:

> Because human beings contain matter and life and mind, as components in their own make up, then of course, we must honour all these *holons*, not only for their own intrinsic worth, which is the most important, but also because they are components in our own being, and destroying them is literally suicidal for us.[1]

Freya Mathews, similarly, identifies three levels of values which she calls, (1) *background value*, (2) *intrinsic*, and (3) *instrumental value*. She derives background value from the intrinsic value of the cosmos. The cosmos as a whole is considered as a self-maintaining self and as such possessing intrinsic value. Just as every part of the human body is important, every part of the universal self too is important. The parts inherit a background value from the value of the whole. So she observes:

> Our world is an expression of selfhood, of a cosmic will-to-exist, and as such has a meaning, and a value, that would not attach to a purely 'blind' and contingent world. There is in this sense an

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[1] Wilber, *Up from Aden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution*, London: Routledge & Kegen Paul, 1983, 13.

> element of affirmation and fulfilment in the existence of every physical thing. Even the rocks call forth a certain reverence in the light of their participation in this great act of self-realization on the part of the cosmos.[2]

Then, there is the second level of intrinsic value in individual selves or self-maintaining systems. Like background value, it is objective, absolute, and is inbuilt into selfhood. The third level of instrumental value applies when something promotes the wellbeing of something else. Instrumental value, though it is relative to a particular organism's usefulness, has an objective quality. Natural entities are to be respected for their own sake instead of regarding them only as means. We lose friends when we use them as means; we lose the pristine quality of Nature by regarding it only as a means.

6. Scientific Bases for Holistic Ethics and Human Life

Quantum physics rewrote the classical physics' conception of a static, fixed container like universe with ultimately separable constituents. According to the organic/holistic/ecological worldview emerging from modern physics, *the universe is no longer seen as a machine, made up of a multitude of objects, but has to be pictured as one indivisible, dynamic whole whose parts are essentially interrelated and can be understood only as patterns of a cosmic process.*

The world is a dynamic web of relations with its own overall self-consistency and that compels us to recognize that consciousness is, after all, an essential aspect of the universe. According to G. Bateson, the author of *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (1988), the mental process is always a sequence of interactions between parts.[3] The explanation of mental phenomena must always reside in the organization and interaction of multiple parts. The mental function is immanent in the interaction of differentiated parts, and the 'wholes' are constituted by such combined interaction of differentiated parts. Life and mind are inbuilt in the dynamics of self-organization. Human individual minds are only subsystems of larger manifestations of mind at social and ecological levels. There are levels of mind corresponding to the stages of evolution. When the mind-matter dichotomy lingers on, it is difficult to see the world as having any mental wave to qualify it as 'mindful'. But in the stratified order of nature, individual human minds are embedded in the larger minds of social and ecological systems, and these are integrated into the planetary mental system – the mind of *Gaia* – which, in turn, must participate in some kind of universal or cosmic mind.[4]

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[2] Freya Mathews, *The Dancing of Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics*, New York: Bantam Books, 1980, 281.

[3] G. Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, New York: Bantam Books, 1988, 99.

Fritjof Capra sees no hitch in associating this cosmic mind with the traditional idea of God. As for Erich Jantisch, God is "the mind of the universe." The God-idea does not stand above or outside of evolution as an ethical norm, but it is placed in true mysticism unfolding into a self-realization of evolution.[5] As Dubley Young comments, the scientific world is, at last, coming to see the intuition of the ancients. He observes that when a physicist says that matter doesn't exist, and is *really* just a mistaken epiphany of the energy-gods, he has almost come full circle, very close to the primitive animist who knows that everything is alive, and derives its liveliness from the winds of *pneuma* that blows through it.[6] For George Wald, physical and psychical are complementary aspects of the same reality. His views are serious and thought provoking. He says:

> If I say the stuff of the world is mind-stuff, that has a metaphysical ring. But if I say that ultimate reality is expressed in the solutions of the equations of quantum mechanics, quantum electro-dynamics, and quantum field theory – that sounds like good, modern physics. Yet what are these equations? Indeed, what is mathematics, but mind-stuff? Virtually, the ultimate is mind-stuff and for that reason deeply mysterious... The universe of space and time and elementary particles and energies, is then an *avatara*, the materialization of primal mind.[7]

The new physics seems to chart a new course entering the domain of mysticism. Appreciating the Vedantic position of the identity of energy (*Śakti*) and consciousness (*cit*), Michael Talbot says: "Matter is condensed energy of *cit* or consciousness itself. As it is written in *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, by energy, consciousness (Brahman or the unbroken Ultimate Reality) is massed; from that *matter* is born *life* and *mind* and the *worlds*."[8]

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[4] Frijof Capra, *The Turning Point*, New York: Bantam Books, 1982, 317.

[5] Erich Jantisch, *The Self-Organizing Universe*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980, 308.

[6] Erich Jantisch, *Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War*, London: Abacus, 1993, xxiv.

[7] George Wald, "Life and Mind in the Universe," Paper Presented in the Seminar of NCERT, New Delhi, February 1987.

Further, the gospel of unity and interconnectedness is echoed in the words of Gary Zukav, who thinks that the philosophy of physics boarders on the philosophy of Buddhism, which is a philosophy of enlightenment. Zukav says that the vital aspect of the enlightened state is the experience of an all-pervading unity. 'This' and 'that' are no longer separate entities. They are different forms of the same thing. Everything is a manifestation of *That* which is beyond words, beyond even space and time. Probably, the dominant chorus within the scientific fraternity is that the cosmic process is a matter of chance and the notion of purpose is a question of individual predilection. Thus, wrote Richard Dawkins:

> Natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind... It does not plan for the future... It has no vision... If it can be said to play the role of a watchmaker in nature, it is the blind watchmaker.[9]

Steven Weinberg, another great physicist, strikes a similar chord, when he says,

> We like to think that we are very special and that we are not the result of a series of accidents reaching back to the "big bang" but on the contrary we were within the cosmic plan. We don't realize that this homely earth is a tiny part in a really hostile universe and is destined to perish in extreme cold or heat. "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless."[10]

There are also critics like Riedel questioning the above theories of chance-mutations. Can chance explain everything? Can an orderly universe be the result of mere chance mutations? In fact, chance and necessity drive forward the evolution of organisms. Prospects of improvement lie in the realm of accidents, but its success, by necessity, depends on how well organism adapts to the novelty. When something is selected from the realm of possibilities it enters the realm of necessity. Restriction of accident will increase the prospect that law will be successfully invented during evolution, restriction of accident leads to a channelization of possibilities and to fixation. According to David Bohm, chance and necessary causal interconnections are two sides of every natural process. Neither causal laws nor laws of chance can be basic and final, rather they are approximations. He says:

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[8] Michael Talbot, *Mysticism and New Physics*, cited in Jitatmananda in *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1993, 2:65.

[9] Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, Essex: Lingman Scientific and Technical, 1986, 5.

[10] S. Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe*, London: Harper Collins, 1993, 149.

> Just as a causal law can arise as a statistical approximation to the average behaviour of a large aggregate of elements undergoing random fluctuations, a law of chance can arise as a statistical approximation to the effects of a large number of causal factors undergoing essentially independent motions.[11]

7. Philosophical Holism: Teleological in Nature of Life Systems

One of the most important features of holism is teleology or purposefulness of each unit (*holon*) of a life-system functioning for the good of the whole system and its allied subsidiaries. Human beings reason out things and execute plans with knowledge and will. The purpose behind our actions is known to us. But animals act for their respective biological ends, though they do not intellectually know their actions and the purpose of the actions. They follow their biological instincts. In this way, the whole Nature is acting for a purpose, for the sake of something. In the case of nonliving things, teleology/purpose is inbuilt into their mechanism and it is manifested in the laws of Nature.

The structure of something is better understood only when we know what it is for. Why should leaves be generally flat? An analysis of their chemical composition will not yield the right answer. The answer lies in the reason for the flatness. Organs of plants and animals are like tools which are designed to carry out certain tasks. No organ can be properly understood without considering its purpose or the special job it does. Nature's wisdom equips every being in such a way that it can find it for itself. This is equivalent to saying that Nature is purposive all the way.

Paul Davies holds that nature is too subtle, too profound. We can scratch the surface of reality, but we will always leave beneath vast, unfathomable depths of mystery. All we can hope to do is to probe a few of the principles which administer the cosmos and marvel at the beauty of it all.

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[11] David Bohm, *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959, 143.

Our scope of vision is far too narrow for us to grapple with deep issues of meaning and purpose.[12]

Every advance in fundamental physics leads to yet another face of order. The very success of scientific method depends on the laws inbuilt in the functioning of the universe. Logically, the universe does not have to be orderly and harmonious. We can conceive a chaotic world of haphazard activities and unstable structures. But the real world is not that way. People believe in the basic orderliness of the world. Its dependability and order are taken for granted; it has become part of our life so much so that it provokes no sense of wonder. Concerning Weinberg's view that the world seems pointless, Paul Davies reacts:

> I think that in part it is a case of being unable to see the wood for the trees. A professional scientist is so immersed in unravelling the laws of nature that he forgets how remarkable it is that there are these laws in the first place. Because science presupposes rational laws, the scientist rarely stops to think about why these laws exist. Just as a crossword addict assumes without thinking that there is an answer to the puzzle, so the scientist rarely questions the fact that there are rational answers to his scientific enquiries.[13]

As there are laws of nature, there is a certain consistency in the world; and consistency at the basic level is that the world continues to exist. There is a spatial order like the arrangement of the solar system and temporal order in the regularity of natural processes like the vibration of an atom, day and night, summer and winter. A living organism is a highly ordered complex structure. The delicate and intricate mechanism like the human eye is superbly designed for the purpose of sight. Millions of highly specialized cells perform peculiar functions in cooperation. Haphazard collection of cells cannot do the job of an eye. No physicist would seriously believe that his subject matter was, in fact, a disorderly and meaningless mass, and that the laws of physics represented no real advance of our understanding. It would be ludicrous to suppose that all science is merely an artificial invention of the mind bearing no more relation to reality than constellation "*Pisces*" bears to real fish.[14]

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[12] Paul Davies, *Superforce: The Search for a Grand Unified Theory of Nature*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985, 222.

[13] Davies, *Superforce*, 222.

[14] Davies, *Superforce*, 237.

8. Holistic Orderliness in Nature and Life-Systems

Physical sciences presuppose laws of nature, and these laws, in turn, imply order and purpose. No science is possible without the laws that govern the world. As Riedel says, the order of this world is one of its basic characteristics, product of the unfolding of natural laws. Order is the condition for understanding the Universe. It forms our thought and practice as a consequence of the patterns in all living structure.

Science attempts to explain the world. But we don't stop with science. As Paul Davies puts it further, though science may explain the world, we still have to explain science. The laws which enable the universe to spontaneously come into being seem themselves to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design; the universe must have a purpose, and the evidence of modern physics suggests strongly that the purpose includes us as well. Science, as it cannot explain all facets of reality, could be supplemented by the richness of human experience. As Pius XII said, "Only human experience taken in its widest sense can uncover, in their infinite variety, all the magnitude, all the possible laws of matter; be teachers eager to reveal creation's beauty, its power, its perfection, and to bring your fellowmen to delight in them."[15]

According to the systems theory, the central characteristic that underlies the dynamics of evolution is creativity rather than adaptation. If evolution can be explained by adaptation alone then it would be difficult to see how living forms ever evolved beyond the level of blue-green algae, which are well-adapted to the environment and have proved their reproductive and survival capacities. The story of evolution is its dynamics of self-transcendence.

9. The Holistic Teleology of Human Life

Human beings find the possibility of reaching higher levels which are self-exceeding. They have an innate urge to go beyond the present level of being. This ever-present unfailing human aspiration, says Sri Aurobindo, is a sure sign of nature's will for a higher way to fulfilment, the emergence of a greater status. An integral transformation is the integral aim of the Being in Nature; this is the inherent sense of her universal urge for self-transcendence.[16]

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[15] Cited in Paul Chauchard, *Man and Cosmos: Scientific Phenomenology in Teilhard de Chardin*, New York: Herder & Herder, 1965, 192.

[16] See Teilhard de Chardin, *Building the Earth*, trans. Noel Linndsay, Wilkes Barre: Dimension Books, 1965, 67, 727.

9.1. A Sense of Communion with Nature and Communion with the "Wholeness"

Humankind's new dialogue with nature must take us to its logical conclusion, i.e., *a greater appreciation for the mystery of nature and a sense of cosmic unity, a sense of communion with all manifestations.* As Barry Lang observes, evolution is not an isolated phenomenon as we tend to think. It is a cosmic process towards cosmic consciousness and conscious participation. Lang says:

> The physical universe itself is a vast intelligence concealing the unity of life – the mystery of life – from all its cosmic parts until each unit-part evolves sufficiently to realize this truth for itself. When it realizes that truth – realizes life – it is truly intelligent and that is the start of cosmic consciousness.[17]

Human beings can break the barriers of individuality and enter into cosmic consciousness and therein grow in the liberating feeling of oneness with all existence and see the selfsame self inhabiting the universe. Humankind in this cosmic consciousness, seeing and feeling all as oneself, would act in that sense; one would act in a universal awareness and a harmony of his/her individual self with the total self, individual will with the total will, and individual action with the total action. In this cosmic consciousness, there is no conflict between the self and the world. There is no confusion as to whether to dominate the world or to be subservient to the world, or to strike a difficult balance between the individual personal destiny and the cosmic purpose. For the one who attained cosmic consciousness, says, Aurobindo:

> The difficulty would not exist, since he has no ego; his cosmic individuality would know the cosmic forces and their movement and their significance as part of himself, and the Truth-Consciousness in him would see the right relation at each step and find the dynamic right expression of that relation. For, in fact, both individual and universe are simultaneous and interrelated expressions of the same transcendent Being.[18]

The new sensitivity radically alters our vision and enables us to see the same life-force operating everywhere. As Barry Lang suggests, the individual life is not an isolated, self-centred event; it is part of the life of the whole. He says:

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[17] Barry Lang, *The Origins of Man and the Universe: The Myth that Came to Life*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, 226.

[18] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram, 1969, 974.

> This life that goes on and on, yet seems to end perfunctorily and witlessly in death for the individual, is not your life or my life at all but the life of the planet earth appearing sense-perceptively as force – life force. Both in living and in surviving death, we all combine like cells to form one single evolving terrestrial being. It is not the evolution of life on earth that is the point, but the evolution of our planet as that life, together with the other planets of the solar system and any other cosmic bodies and stars.[19]

9.2. Finding Value and Meaning in Nature and Beyond

Discovering value in nature is the present-day task as science and technology degrade nature to the level of mere resources to be exploited at will. The primal cultures, however, had grater sensitivity towards the meaning and mystery of nature and accorded the earth the status of a mother. The female earth as central to the organic cosmology was undermined by the scientific revolution and the rise of market-oriented production culture in early modern Europe almost denuded the natural attire of the feminine landscapes and turned them into junkyards for dumping industrial wastes. The ecological sensitivity, however, has reawakened interest in the values and concepts associated historically with the pre-modern organic world.[20]

Nature, in as much as it represents a conscious self-transcending process, has value in itself. The dynamics of evolution and its progressive march reveal a potency which is a sort of ultimacy. Ultimacy as potentiality is, thus, the ontological ground of nature-as-meaning. Meaning is essentially relational. As Bernard Lonergan shows, everything finds this value and has its value ultimately in the final cause in the ground of being. The final cause, then, is the ground of value, and it is the ultimate cause of causes, for it overcomes contingence at its deepest level. Being cannot be arbitrary, and contingent being must be a reasonably realized possibility. Its possibility is grounded in the exemplary cause, its realization in the efficient cause, but its reasonableness in the final cause.

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[19] Barry Lang, *Origin of Man and the Universe*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, 153-154.

[20] Carolyn Merchant, *Earth Care: Women and the Environment*, New York: Routledge, 1995, 76.

From a naturalistic, "thoroughly immanent conception of the holy," Ned Hetinger attempts to show that nature is sacred and precious and finds religious and spiritual significance in the earth. He finds meaning not beyond the world but in "an altered understanding of and relationship to this earth." "Our encounter with nature, its majesty and magnificence, elicits a sense of awe in us and the earth is revealed as a holy place. One's natural response, then, is to love this earth intensely. The awesome power of the world can teach us humility and open our eyes to see that after all we are not masters of the world. Being brought into existence and shaped by this earth, humans are 'earthlings'." Gary Snyder eloquently puts it as follows:

> But how could we be, were this not for this planet that provided our very shape? Two conditions – gravity and a liveable temperature range between freezing and boiling – have given us fluids and flesh. The trees we climb and the ground we walk on have given us five fingers and toes. The 'place' gave us far-seeing eyes. The land gave us a strive and the lake a dive. The amazement gave us our kind of mind.[21]

The earth, bubbling with life, is a miraculous event. We are surrounded by the miraculous but we take it for granted. As Wendel Berry says, we see that the miraculous is not extraordinary but the common mode of existence. It is our daily bread. We forget the greater miracle by which water (with soil and light) is turned into grapes. Thomas Berry adds to this line of thinking and suggests that the natural world is not only the *matrix* of our biological existence but also the medium of our higher values:

> The natural world is the material source of our being as earthlings and the life-giving nourishment of our physical, emotional, aesthetic, moral and religious existence. The natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong. To be alienated from this community is to become destitute in all that makes us human. To damage this community is to diminish our own existence.[22]

10. Eco-Ethics of Stewardship and Partnership

If the world negating ascetic strand in some religious traditions was to some extent responsible for maltreating and endangering our planet, an ecological re-evaluation of our ethical vision can be helpful in nurturing an eco-friendly worldview. Religious perceptions sometimes tend to be dualistic and condition our ethical norms. They put the divine outside the world leading to anti-nature stance. Viewed from certain religious apocalyptic perspective, environmental ethics may be downgraded as meaningless, as this world will be ultimately destroyed by its Creator. In the traditional Indian religious perspectives, God is not only creator and preserver but also its destroyer. Hence, the three representations of the Ultimate Brahman taking creative role as *Brahma*, preservative role as *Viṣnu* and finally consummative or destructive role as *Śiva*, who will ultimately reduce this beautiful planet into a mega-cemetery where everything will be made to rest into a *mahāpralaya*, immersion into the immensity of the Divinity of the Brahman. The biblical eschatology is also very close to this view of finally reducing and submitting the whole creation unto God where "God becomes all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). Maybe, due to this ultimate cosmic cancellation of the creation by its Creator, there is a subtle aversion to its temporary promises in the minds of many Christians. This also might have motivated certain materialistically interested industrialists to exploit this earth and its resources as much as possible for the sake of money and market in the present age and despise it as a bundle of matter to be finally renounced to get out of it for getting the so-called "eternal happiness," which is beyond time and space, in the further shore, about which many of the contemporary big fellows in most of the nations are not concerned at all, or are not even rationally or religiously informed of. Consequently, such "big brothers" place themselves above a de-sacralized world and apparently attempt to dominate it through science and technology aiming at maximum productivity and utility for this worldly existence.

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[21] Gary Snyder, *Practice of the Wild*, New York: North Point Press, 1997, 29.

[22] Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, San Francisco: Siera Club Books, 1998, 17.

However, positive thinking in religion upholds a triple harmony between the human and the divine, person and nature, and person and person. God is the creator of the universe; creation effects an organic wholeness, a cosmic community; hence, a dichotomy between nature and religion is unwarranted. God is immanent in creation sustaining it, maintaining it and providing for its replenishment in rhythmic seasonal cycles. Concepts like incarnation and *avatār* show God's togetherness vis-à-vis creation. Earth is the Lord's and is meant for all creation, and not to be set for the exclusive use of some superpowers. Christian thought recognizes the ethical teleology of all creation (Rom. 8.19- 22; 1 Cor. 15:28). Liberation is not exclusively human. Humanity is redeemed *with* the created order, not *from* it. For the philosophies of dualism, domination, and violence reflect not the divine will but the pettiness of human will and its pretended autonomy.

Human uniqueness as the crown of creation has been used as a justification to dominate the world. But actually it should be used for universal care. As ethical beings, it is our duty and privilege to be in partnership with God in his ongoing creation. The biblical image of stewardship (Genesis 2:15) attests to this human calling. Our cultural or religious metaphor of '*dominus*' needs to be replaced by the new metaphor of '*socius*', a friend, a friend of nature and creation, a friend who loves nature as a partner, and takes care of her as a sister or brother, like Francis of Assisi, the patron of ecology. Bearing God's image means we participate with God in drawing out the divine potential of the world. Contemporary science itself suggests that a human person is the second creator. In quantum theory it is the observer who elicits certain properties of the atomic phenomenon.

Our eco-consciousness must be our enlightenment over the universe. It is the experience of connectedness with the entire web of life and, hence, profoundly spiritual. Matter is not the opposite of spirit; material realm and the spiritual realm are not dichotomous, but continuous. Spirit is life; its opposite is not matter but death and all that lead to death, such as oppression, injustice, and destruction of our homely habitat. Our ultimate failure as humans is to become the instrument of earth's degradation. We have to accept responsibility for what we do. The earth is on the balance of a responsible decision of humankind either in favour of her survival or in condemnation of her annihilation. Domination satisfies human vain glory, but human fulfilment comes not from domination but from partnership and togetherness. Domination is manipulative, but partnership is mutually contributive for mutual benefit. Our sacred duty is to promote the ultimate wellbeing of the natural process from which we have emerged. A partnership ethics demands that we maintain the integrity of the earth so much so that we keep it natural, beautiful, and healthy, as God' own image.

Life is fellow living; the universe itself reveals community. Though modern times belong to the individual and individual rights, individual must fit into the community, social as well as planetary. Rights of the person are also the rights of the planet. Human self-fulfilment, self-realization must involve the discovery of the self as belonging to the community, the earth and the universe. Our ecological relatedness and friendliness to our planet and its numerous creatures should lead us from egocentrism to eco-centrism. A holistic environmental ethics is an adventure in the love of life for a global civilization of peace and harmony.

11. Practice of *Ahimsa* as Humane Affectionate Ways with the Nature

The central principle of holistic eco-ethics is practising non-violence towards Nature and her creatures. Non-violence (*ahimsa*) to Nature and natural realities is very basic to Indian religious and spiritual outlook. This is also the inspiration behind the well-known moral ideals of non-violence, i.e., *ahimsa*, to be practised in mind, word, and deed in relation to all creation. *Ahimsa*, though sounds negative in its verbal expression, is very positive in its meaning and signification; it represents the following virtuous practices: to be tender, serene, compassionate, kind, gentle, friendly, and to be attractive to others in charm and humour. These together constitute what is meant by *ahimsa* as the first of the two basic disciplines known as *yama* (the other being *niyama)* of the great *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* of Patañjali of the great Indian spiritual heritage. Sri Buddha, Sri Kriṣṇa and Jesus Christ, Francis Assisi, Mahatma Gandhi and many other great personalities this Mother Earth had generated are epitomes of this great multi-faceted virtue called *ahimsa.*

Practice of *ahimsa* is not to be compromised with the western materialistic ideology of exploitation of Nature under the pretext of "progress and development." The western industrialists, who have de-sacralised and irreparably polluted their geographical areas of this planet and profanely treated the natural environment by dumping atomic, chemical, and other toxic industrial wastes, have already started encroaching into the serene and clean environment of the developing nations, and they have already exploited, spoiled. They have polluted the living environment of millions people of the developing countries, endangering their lives, all under the tantalizing banner of "development and progress"! Is consumeristic development alone to be considered progressive? If it is, we are blindly led to the catastrophe of suffering from the "Poverty of the Spirit." To confront this, we need appropriate planning and maintenance of *the values of sanity and sanctity as well as of saving and sharing*, in the true spirit of non-violence to Nature, the all-nurturing habitat, and to our own homes and their neat and tidy environments.

By way of an impartial observation about the domestic practice of *ahimsa* and its applied virtues in the environment of our homes, it seems that we should in a special way appreciate the daily routine of the family life of our devoted Hindu neighbours. Their daily worship in the domestic niche in front of their divine house patron (*Iṣṭadevata*) becomes the first spiritual duty of a householder; whereas sweeping the courtyard and other domestic premises, washing the portico, decorating the frontage floor with *rangoli* (a symbolic drawing) and the inner shrine with flowers and garlanding the images of the forefathers, *gurus*, and *āchāryas* are some of the initial spiritual duties of the wife of the householder and children. All other activities, either official or of daily routine, should proceed after these initial sacred rituals which to a great extent effect harmony with God, Nature, and ourselves in our homely habitat.

Thus, these actions at the domestic divine centres are constitutive of a holistic vision of life at home and it is closely related to the total spectrum of life of the families of our composite religio-spiritual culture of India. While respecting our particular religious denominational identities, we should share our common sacred family values, faith-motifs, social duties, neighbourly courtesy visits and other domestic etiquettes and hospitalities. Thus, living our daily life by sharing common cultural, religious, ethical, and spiritual values makes us feel happy with one another as fellow pilgrims making a common journey towards achieving some common good and welfare for all. This is in essence the holistic way of living while working for the common good of saving this planet for our posterity so that our children too play jovially on the courtyard of this Planet Earth.

The understanding is that if the house and its premises are clean, beautiful, and orderly, there would be certain homeliness because of which everybody feels at home and everybody feels that there is no place on the planet earth more lovable than one's own home. In fact, this is the most important factor that nurtures loving attitude to nature, to the universe as a whole, human beings as well as animals, vegetation and even the soil. A sense of respect for everything and everybody, according to a scale of preference based on the sense of the sacred, is derived from the awareness that this is a world enveloped and indwelt by the Divine Spirit. This awakens in a human person a certain *sense of mystery* that surrounds our living environment. Although not everything is crystal clear to every human being regarding the working of the Divine Spirit in this material nature and its transformative process therein, yet something is in his/her grasp, physically and spiritually, mentally and environmentally. Wisdom sayings, like “Cleanliness is Godliness,” “Godliness is homeliness,” etc., are saturated guidelines for life. We humans should strive to live up to these spiritual ideals of ecological harmony, and this is in summary applying eco-friendly ethical principles to resolve both the local and global environmental crises.

12. Conclusion

In attempting to apply holistic ethical norms towards solving our contemporary environmental crises endangering our life and that of our fellow creatures on this planet, I derive the following conclusion: Everybody understands the extrinsic value of things of this world. But as rational spiritual beings, we must grow in sensitivity to see the ground value and intrinsic value of all things in their holistic co-relation and final intentionality in relation to our life on earth and its transcendental openness to the Wholeness of Reality which is beyond our ordinary perceptions and sensations. Polluting the environment is a social sin that many do not own up. Indeed, the very notion of pollution involves a moral judgment: a threat to some of our cherished values of happy life. Rules against pollution defend a specific social order, establishment of which is the responsibility of individuals as well as organisations and governments.

Eco-crisis is not just a scientific problem that can be solved merely by technological inventions. It is cultural, religious, and moral as well as social dimensions, affecting our sacred family life in an alarming way. Hence, it needs some ethical solutions, seasoned with a clear religious, moral and spiritual vision about our life to be lived in tune with the survival of this planet together with all other supporting life saving sub-structures and fellow beings of our planet, which was “blessed” and found “good” by the Creator for the birth and growth of all living beings, while the human beings are appointed its custodians, protectors, and preservers as the Bible and other great scriptures of all religions enlighten us.

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ECO-FEMIN(*ISM*) AND HINDU(*ISM*)

Positioning Contemporary Eco-Ethic Conversation

Maheshvari Naidu◆

1. Introduction

The article examines the complex cluster of issues that accrete around attempts to refract a contemporary 'Hindu' eco-ethic from ancient scriptural sources. So often, scholars and religious adherents alike refer back to the 'golden eco-age' alluded to in the various Vedic, Upaniṣadic and Puraṇic injunctions with their invocations adoring both the earth and the life it sustains. As an academic field of study within the social sciences, however, "Religion and Ecology" is a relatively recent sub-discipline of "Religion Studies."

The claim of ecological consciousness within Hinduism is explored by revisiting the category of 'Hinduism' within the context of Religion Studies and by probing Hinduism's claim of a historically sustained relationship of eco-sensitivity. It asks how this professed worldview, romanticised as it may well be, and in any event so far removed in space and time, can be seen as translating into contemporary vocabulary.

We situate this question within the field of Religion and Ecology and the views and cautions of scholars working in the field. This, then, attempts to add to the discussion of the relationship between ecology and the Hindu religion. It proceeds by attempting to further problematize, rather than simply reconcile, by bringing into conversation also eco-feminism. Eco-feminism, which is seen as working to transcend certain value dualisms, is, thus, brought into a space of dialogue with a particular non-dual school of thought in Hinduism, which also looks at transcending the binary dualities of subject-object.

2. Ecology and Hinduism: A Possible Relationship

The academic study of Hinduism in relation to ecological issues appears to exhibit a particular typology. There are the hermeneutic and exegetical analyses of various liturgical, religio-mythological and historical texts, "in order to elucidate various philosophical arguments and precepts concerning the environment," the ethnographically based analyses, "that

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focus on particular cultural practices," as in the context of sacred groves, and socio-political analyses of movements and organisations "that actively mobilise religious values and beliefs in pursuit of various environmental goals."[1] Emma Mawdsley points out that many of these so-called analyses "complicate the popular assumption that Hinduism, like other "eastern religions," necessarily encourages behaviours that are environmentally positive."[2] This research is not positioned from an ethnographic perspective looking at certain cultural constructions of environment but is rather an attempt to add to the discussion around the complexity of constructing hermeneutic links between Hinduism and contemporary approaches to ecological issues.

While there are, indeed, nuanced writings that tease out the referential meaning of 'nature', 'environment', and 'ecology', this study does not engage in the various discourses that surround such terms and chooses to use the terms interchangeably. The focus is rather on positioning a possible dialogue, within Religion and Ecology discourse, between a particular strand of Hindu religion and eco-feminism.

Snyder informs us that, since the 1970s, the discipline of religious studies has seen an explosion of literature probing the possible interconnections between the world religions and ecological thought. He states that, in just a little over two decades, by 1991, the area was developed to the extent that the American Academy of Religion was able to grant group status to the Religion and Ecology Group. This was seen to have precipitated a series of conferences on Religion and Ecology at Harvard University, which, in turn, led to the formation of the Forum on Religion and Ecology.[3] Snyder points out that the turn in academic circles, to Eastern religious traditions as a possible means of healing perceived rift between human beings and nature is far from new. He states:

> In 1956, Alan Watts, drawing upon Eastern traditions in Nature, Man and Woman, professed the inseparability of humans from nature. Lynn White also famously suggested in "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (1967) that Eastern religious traditions might offer antidotes to the environmentally destructive trajectories of Judaism

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[1] E. Mawdsley, "The Abuse of Religion and Ecology: The Vishva Hindu Parishad and Tehri Dam," *Worldviews* 9, 1 (2005), 3.

[2] Mawdsley, "The Abuse of Religion and Ecology," 5.

[3] S. Snyder, "Chinese Traditions and Ecology: Survey Article," *Worldviews* 10, 1 (2006), 100.

and Christianity; while Huston Smith in "Tao Now: An Ecological Testament" (1972), maintained that Chinese traditional attitudes toward nature might serve as tools for expanding the West's environmental awareness.[4]

Within the context of several Hindu traditions, two broadly constructed books that address nature and environment issues are, *Purifying the Earthly Body of God* (1998) and *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water* (2000). We are told that the latter volume is a product of the Forum on Religion and Ecology, which convened the earlier mentioned scholarly series of conferences at Harvard (1996-1998) that explored the convergences between religious and ecological topics.[5]

The task of relating religious traditions to the current concerns of environmental crises, however, is not straightforward. Scholars, like Larson, Doniger, Kinsley, and others, raise questions as to the viability of turning to Eastern traditions to help with global problems. They ask whether it is possible for a religious tradition to function properly outside its context of origination. Critics maintain that although the possibility exists, the tradition in question does not remain the same as it is in its original context. Gerald Larson expresses concern over what he sees to be the *selective use* of religious traditions as an expression no less similar to a kind of colonialism. He prefers traditions to "illuminate contemporary issues through conversation and not extraction."[6]

These are very legitimate concerns that one needs necessarily to be alert when attempting to link a particular religious tradition to modern environmental concerns. Within the structured realities of North South relations and the guises of neo-colonialism that continue to configure power relations between countries, between religious groups and between so-called ethnic communities, all allusions to colonialism need to be treated seriously. Of equal concern are those issues posed in the relatively innocently framed guises of romanticism and essentialism.

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[4] Snyder, "Chinese Traditions and Ecology," 100.

[5] G. Van Horn, "Hindu Traditions and Nature: Survey Article," *Worldviews* 10, 1 (2006), 5.

[6] G. James Larson, "Discourse about 'Religion' in Colonial and Postcolonial India" in *Ethical and Political Dilemmas of Modern India*, Ninian Smart and Shivesh Thakur, eds., New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, 191.

3. Romanticising and Essentialising Hinduism

Writing on the origins of religious environmentalism, Emma Tomalin succinctly lays bare that this is a modern phenomenon that goes back no further than the 1960s.[7] She speaks of the 'myth of primitive ecological wisdom' that is part of a larger body of romantically framed assumptions about the existence of an 'eco-golden age' of early communities of people such as the Indian Hindu, African Khoi-San, Australian Aborigine, and others, when people were perceived to have lived in harmony with their natural environment. Unlike the religious notions of the Khoi and the Aborigine, much is known about the religious beliefs of the people of India as they moved from a history of oral traditions to written texts and as the religion is very much a lived religion that is still practised. This, in turn, has led to a vast array of lyrical descriptions and appellations, both the early religious communities in India and their perceived values and behaviours erected on allusions to the so-called historicity of the religion. This narrative of historicity is conjoined to a narrative of essentialism and is a powerful example of a kind of epistemic violence of the sameness that is constructed and that acts to sublimate religious traditions into a homogenous entity.

Not withstanding my decidedly *un*-athletic nature, I prefer to run a mile (both literally and methodologically speaking) from any one or any sentence that opens with, "Hinduism, the oldest religion in the world," or "Hinduism, one of the oldest religions in the world," or even the somewhat more conservatively constructed, "Hinduism, the oldest continuously practised religion in the world." Or, the very larger than life assertion that Hinduism "contains the truth of all religions and is accepting of all religions." These are various openings favoured by scholars taking a confessional approach and one, to continue the metaphor of movement away, distances oneself from such broad statements. It is also an opening favoured by religious adherents, that category of believers who also seek to write down their thoughts and beliefs. Here one needs to rightfully respect the internal thoughts and beliefs of the devotee, for the religious adherents' inner world is not one that social scientists should seek to deconstruct and tear apart.

However, that said, it is also an inner (believers') world that social sciences approaches, such as anthropology, or theoretical approaches, such as feminism, would also not necessarily accept as holding representatively true or valid for all people in all religious and cultural contexts, or even within the 'same' religion for that matter.

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[7] E. Tomalin, "Bio-Divinity and Biodiversity: Perspectives on Religion and Environmental Conservation in India," *NUMEN* 51 (2004), 267.

Given the multifarious nature of multiple religious/spiritual/mystical/inner worlds of believers, (*all* being true, in terms of differently positioned believers in different traditions) none can be accepted as including or being the same as all other religions in the sense of their ontological, soteriological, or ethical worldviews. Granted, an all-inclusive attitude may not prove such a problem to inclusively structured religions like Hinduism. It would, however, prove notoriously difficult to have the average Catholic Church-going believer finding solace and truth in the text or sacred space that the Hindu takes shelter in. While the Hindu is, so to say, a good Hindu, for following what she perceives to be an inclusive all-embracing attitude to the reality of religious pluralism, the Christian is likewise being a good Christian in her non-inclusive stance of believing that Christianity is the only path to the only true God. Of concern to us, though, is that this inner world is neither verifiable or falsifiable nor reproducible by conditions that are demanded by rigorous social scientific scrutiny. Thus, there is no way to logically sustain the essentialist claim, outside of particular lived faith-based experiences, or even externally observed mystical experiences of saints, sages, and mystics, that there is *one* essential religion, true for all socio-cultural groups, or even that there is one monolithic Hinduism or Christianity for that matter. Thus, it is not, as Sriraman and Benesch claim in monolithic terms, that "present day Hinduism can be traced back to the 1017 hymns of the *Ṛgveda* (c.1500 BCE),[8] and it is overly simplistic to assert, as Coward, writing a decade ago, as if there was only one 'Hinduism', that "ancient Hindu myth is founded on a profoundly ecological vision."[9] These assertions are illustrations of constructions that are passed of as being true and in time became embedded in a matrix of collective memory that haunt the corridors of academia as well the cultural spaces of congregational worship as apparitions of objectivity.

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[8] B. Sriraman and W. Benesch, "Consciousness and Science: An Advaita-Vedantic Perspective on the Science-Theology Dialogue," *Theology and Science* 3, 1 (2005), 42.

[9] H. Coward, "Hindu Spirituality and the Environment," *Eco-Theology* 3 (1997), 50.

Feminist theory, like other theories, has a lived social life.[10] Feminist theory is particularly adept at emphasising the ways cultural systems present constructions of ‘reality’ as if they were natural, given, or objective. This hermeneutic is of value to us in our discussion of a contemporary ‘earth ethic’ drawn from Hindu religious sources. For those scholars and adherents who do refer back to Hinduism as holding within its teachings, respect and awareness of the environment, often present this as a monolithic teaching within Hinduism while, at the same time, presenting an essentialist profile which mutes the many equally rich and variegated strands within Hinduism.

Several comparative religionists (Smart, Kinsley, Kumar, etc.) have pointed out that the generic term ‘Hinduism’ is quite often indiscriminately passed off to mean the Brahmanic Hindu religion (predominantly, although not exclusively, if one considers diasporic Hindus) of many middle class Hindus. While this is a legitimate expression of the Hindu religion, it is by no means the exclusive profile of a religion. For ‘Hinduism’ contains within the plural folds of its worldview/s, also the religious tenets of other categories of people who refer to themselves as Hindus, yet remaining outside the mainstream Sanskrit tradition, such as the unscheduled castes assembled under the rubric of the term Dalits, as well as the large rural populace of India that practises Mother or Amman worship, also a non-Brahmanical form of Hinduism.

Mawdsley very appropriately cautions us not to don the guise of what she refers to as “new traditionalists” attempting to recover “ancient ecological wisdom” by working to construct and erect the edifice of an idealised vision of past social and environmental harmony, in a bid to engineer a vision for an alternative future. She continues:

> As well as their historical inaccuracy and social conservatism (such arguments often ignore the evidence of human-induced ancient and pre-colonial environmental change; and neglect or even condone historical inequalities of gender, class and caste), these “new traditionalists” have difficulty in presenting realistic agendas for engaging with modern India – its industrialisation, urbanization.[11]

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[10] A. Appadurai, *Globalisation: Modernity at Large*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, 11.

[11] Mawdsley, “The Abuse of Religion and Ecology,” 5.

Historically, India has been a shelter to both synchronistic developing and competing traditions. Gavin Horn states that, until the twentieth century, Hindus had a concept of India as a sacred space and they had histories and epics that established their complex common ancestry, but they did not develop a concept of themselves as a society unified by religion. He adds the imperative that the colonial reduction of religious diversity within Asian studies is one that needs to be acknowledged, pointing out that it shaped the way that Hinduism was presented and examined by those in the West.[12] In this context, van Horn states:

> Using religion as a universal designation for the multiplicity of cultural traditions found scattered among peoples throughout the globe is best done with caution and sensitivity to potential subjective biases and cultural blind spots. The term "Hinduism" is historically foreign to Indian culture(s), since it was first imposed externally, even if it has now been more widely adopted by different groups in India (not unlike – with some irony, it might be added – American "Indians" being used as an appellation for the incredibly diverse peoples who were "discovered" by Europeans in the fifteenth century).[13]

Van Horn cites Jacobsen[14] as detailing the narrative of interaction between early European missionaries and western anthropologists and scholars as they encountered and named the Other. Jacobsen states that the word "Hindu" was most probably derived from a geographical association with the Indus River, and had been used by Muslim invaders to describe the religious practices of non-Muslims as early as the eleventh century. One also adds that most scriptures, commentaries, legal treatises, when they eventually came to be formally recorded, reflect the views of their authors, who were usually elite, high caste, and educated.[15] As shown by Witt and Wiles, in their article "Nature in Asian indigenous Traditions,"[16] there exist other alternate discourses on Indigenous ('Hindu' and other) traditions and Nature.

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[12] Van Horn, "Hindu Traditions and Nature," 6.

[13] Van Horn, "Hindu Traditions and Nature," 7.

[14] Van Horn, "Hindu Traditions and Nature," 7, citing K. A. Jacobsen, "India" in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, Bron Taylor, ed., London: Continuum, 2005, 823-827.

[15] Mawdsley, "The Abuse of Religion and Ecology," 4.

[16] Joseph Witt and David Wiles, "Nature in Asian Indigenous Traditions: A Survey Article," *Worldviews* 10, 1 (2006), 40-68, 42.

Van Horn writes in his article, where he surveys the ethnographic and theoretical literature on Hinduism and ecology, that he uses the term 'Hinduism' "only as a useful conceptual umbrella that indicates diversity more than unity, fluidity rather than stasis, and multiple practices rather than singular orthodoxies."[17] I would like to follow suit, and submit that I too use the terms 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' within this essay, as a conceptual organiser that refers to the religion's multiple and fluid personality rather than having it attempt to mute plurality and multiplicity.

Notwithstanding, the 'Hindu' tradition, however, has drawn much attention within religious environmentalist literature where commentators argue for its (Hinduism's) innate sensitivity towards the natural world.[18] In this regard, says Emma Tomalin, who has done much sustained work in the field of religion and ecology within the Hindu traditions.

> Religious environmentalists argue that religious traditions teach that the Earth is sacred and that this has traditionally served to exert control over how people interact with the natural world. However, while the recognition of "bio-divinity" is a feature of many religious traditions, including Hinduism, this is to be distinguished from religious environmentalism, which involves the conscious application of religious ideas to modern concerns about the global environment. Religious environmentalism is a post-materialist environmental philosophy that has emerged from the West and has its roots in the eighteenth century European "Romantic Movement."[19]

There are two points for consideration here: the first, as pointed out earlier, is that when we argue that Hinduism offers a privileged relationship to the environment, we need to clarify which Hinduism we are referring to. For, within the 'Hindu' religion there are multiple and at times competing worldviews that make it notoriously difficult to offer with any integrity, an overarching essentialist definition or description of what it is. This may well itself offer some answers in the seemingly large disjuncture between religious bio-divinity, where the environment is conceived as being sacred, and environmentally sensitive behaviour, which might well be absent.

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[17] Van Horn, "Hindu Traditions and Nature," 7.

[18] Tomalin, "Bio-Divinity and Biodiversity," 266.

[19] Tomalin, "Bio-Divinity and Biodiversity," 265.

The second point is that there is in itself a major difference between what is conceived of as a bio-divinity and that of religious environmentalism. Each of these concepts comes with its own historical and intellectual lineage. Tomalin adds that while bio-divinity, or divinising nature, has been a feature of many religio-cultural traditions historically, it is not synonymous with *religious environmentalism*, "which involves the conscious application of religious ideas to contemporary concerns about an environmental crisis."[20]

While scholarly critiques are attentive to the complexity of India's geographical diversity and seek to deconstruct and contest both the notion of a nativist ecological consciousness,[21] many other writers see a leitmotif of reverence for nature and environment in Hinduism. However, having environmentally sound principles in the religious tradition does not necessarily translate to environmentally sound behaviour. In an early 1967 essay by cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan entitled, "Discrepancies between Environmental Attitude and Behaviour: Examples from Europe and China," he points out that while there is an "abundance of environmentally friendly beliefs in the religious and cultural traditions of China, the actual practices of the Chinese have hardly lived up to the ideal expressed in their traditions."[22] Tomalin's[23] work with the traditional priests on the banks of the Ganges River reveals the difference between bio-divinity and environmental consciousness, and shows that even though the River is worshipped as sacred, there is a huge discrepancy between the theological understanding of ritual purity and actually maintaining physical cleanliness of the river. Alley's work cited by Mawdsley also reveals that various cognitive frameworks are seen to operate around the issue of pollution at the Ganges.[24] The proverbial bottom-line is that essentialist arguments, to me, are inherently problematic. While they appear to be inclusive, they are also subtly hegemonic. They exclude, more than they include. Thus, in our endeavour to extract an eco-ethic, we need to be clear as to which

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[20] Tomalin, "Bio-Divinity and Biodiversity," 266.

[21] E. Mawdsley, "India's Middle Classes and the Environment," *Development and Change* 35, 1 (2004), 83.

[22] Snyder, "Chinese Traditions and Ecology," 104.

[23] See E. Tomalin, "The Limits of Environmentalism in India," *Worldviews* 6 (2002), 1-30 and "Bio-Divinity and Biodiversity: Perspectives on Religion and Environmental Conservation in India," *NUMEN* 51 (2004), 265-295.

[24] Mawdsley, "The Abuse of Religion and Ecology," 1-24.

Hinduism we are referring to. This is not a mere hair splitting exercise, but serves to protect the integrity of that which we seek to refract through contemporary time and idiom and attempts to avoid further (ideologically) colonizing certain groups of people.

4. Non-dualism as a Particular Philosophical Stream in Hinduism

Given the inherent difficulties in essentialist and romantic accounts, this discussion of 'Hinduism' and the environment has narrowed the gaze specifically onto a particular non-dual perspective that can be traced to the later Upaniṣads in phrases such as *tat tvam asi* (That Thou Art), from the *Chāṇdogya Upaniṣad*, or *aham bramāsi* (Brahman Art Thou), to be found in the *Bṛhdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.*

For the most part, the Vedic literature is replete with a pantheon of gods Agni, Uṣas, Mitra, Varuṇa, Soma, and so on. Indologists, like Max Muller, Frauwallner, and Radhakrishnan, have revealed the richness of the Vedic mythology and the gods in Vedic mythology that boast both virile (Indra, Mitra,) and enchanting (Uṣas, Agni) personalities much like the Greek and Roman gods. It is not within the ambit of this study to examine the conflicting discourses around whether the Vedas represent the religion of the invading Indo-Germanic people who came to be known as the Aryans, or whether the Aryans were themselves an early North Indian group germane to India.

What I want to call attention to is that, while the Vedas are more liturgical, the Upaniṣads are more philosophical. It is also a matter of discussion as to the extent that non-dualistic ideas are developed in the Vedas themselves. Vedantic philosophies were in part intended to systematize the diverse speculations of the Upaniṣads and establish their legitimacy as orthodox, revealed texts.[25] These philosophical ideas, however, are not always coherently organised into philosophical systems as they are the expression of centuries of preceding oral 'texts' that came to be 'arrested' on palm leaves in time. This explains some of the inconsistent structure and inconsistently articulated philosophical ideas in the various Upaniṣadic texts.

However, it is in the later Upaniṣadic literature that we do find seminal, albeit disordered philosophical ideas that begin to find their fledgling development and are eventually adopted by the philosophical giants, such as Śaṅkara, Madhva, and Rāmānuja and others. The fact that all three thinkers can legitimately refer back to the Upaniṣads to validate their different philosophies testifies to the fact that many seemingly contradictory ontological and epistemological utterances live amiably side by side in these texts. Thus, both Śaṅkara's eighth century non-theistic Brahman as consciousness, or system of *Advaita*, the eleventh century theistic *Dvaita* of Madhva, as well as Rāmānuja's thirteenth century theistic god philosophy or *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, can claim their ancestral roots in the Upaniṣads. This bears out my earlier point that it is dangerous to essentialise the multiple strands of 'Hindu' religious and philosophical thinking as it does a kind of epistemic violence to the rich diversity and multivalence within the religious and philosophical systems that go by the popular generic of 'Hinduism'.

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[25] F. Clooney, "Vedanta, Theology, and Modernity: Theology's New Conversation with the World's Religions," *Theological Studies* 51, 2 (1990), 410.

Advaita is assumed an excellent conversation partner, thought of as being able to enter meaningfully into conversation with contemporary concerns. For the purposes of our discussion, the gaze is further narrowed onto a particular organising tenet of Advaita Vedanta, that of the popular and frequently quoted *mahāvākya* or great utterance of *tat tvam asi* as understood within Śaṅkarite philosophic thinking. It is to this *mahāvākya* as expounded in the Vedānta Sūtras of Bādrāyaṇa that we turn in our attempt to probe the plausibility of translating into contemporary language, an 'earth ethic' based on ancient scriptural sources. It is important that we take a particular exegetical unpacking of Sankara for our focus. While both *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and *Dvaita* have offered their own hermeneutic of this *mahāvākya*, it is specifically the exegesis offered by Śaṅkara that I feel best serves a contemporary feminist idiom.

While Rāmānuja describes a loving theistic Brahman within which the individual Ātman is both the same *and* different, Madhva describes the statement also in theistic referents but dualistically, to be actually *atat tvam asi*, Brahman and Ātman are different. However, Śaṅkara unpacks a philosophy of not two, where Ātman and Brahman are grasped as One, as the monistic principle of Brahman. This Brahman is to be arrived at by the double negation as mentioned in the *Bṛhdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, contained in the statements, "Brahman is not this…, Brahman is not that," or 'not this' 'not this', *neti*, *neti*, where having negated everything that exists (in both material and non-material terms) one 'arrives', having never been anywhere else, at the Brahman.

The hermeneutics of his reasoning, as that of his many skilled commentators is highly nuanced, subtle and fine grained whereas we are, for our purposes, looking at an almost bare-bones description of Advaita philosophy. The technicalities of Vedānta interpretation lie outside the scope of this study and for the present purposes, we may be forgiven for capturing merely the starkness of the utterance as being that of the monistic principle of 'Brahman and Ātman are One'. The Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara attempts to resolve the Upaniṣadic dilemma of the nature of Brahman and provides perhaps a solution to the western dilemma of dualism.[26] Sriraman and Benesch are of the opinion that one of the most influential and far reaching paradigmatic shifts in the natural sciences (of the west) in contemporary times has been away from the view of a complete duality or "separation between observer and observed, to an awareness that an observer also represents a living aspect of that which is being observed."[27]

It is also the singular Advaita hermeneutic of ultimate non-duality that we seek to refract through eco-feminism. According to Advaitic doctrine, the true nature of Brahman is to be arrived at by the sublimation of dualities. This particular exegetical unpacking of scripture follows from the Advaitic doctrine of two levels of 'reality': *vyāvahārika* or the phenomenal, relative reality, where duality is experienced and the *pāramārthika*, or transcendental non-dual reality. Etymologically, *a-dvaita* means the negation of all duality.[28]

> Etymologically, "*advaita*" does not so much present a clear assertion about the nature of being as it attempts to rule out from the beginning a false understanding of reality. *Advaita* is basically a denial; it is literally the negation of a duality (*a-dvaita*) of some unspecified type.[29]

5. Conversation between Eco-Feminism and Advaita Vedānta

The reflexively positioned Second Wave feminism can be seen as having rebelled against essentialised and 'othered' categories such as women, and essentialised and othered groups of religions and religious communities of people. As a body of theory, it sought to include the lived experiences of black, and the so-called 'third world' women as well as the subalterns as previously marginalised others. 'Feminism Studies' within religion was likewise conscientised to be alert to powerful religious discourses that may well have muted alternate narratives, which more faithfully represented the lived experiences of various subalterns such as the indigenous religious traditions of countries like India.

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[26] Sriraman and Benesch, "Consciousness and Science," 43.

[27] Sriraman and Benesch, "Consciousness and Science," 35.

[28] M. P. P. Penumaka, "Luther and Shankara: Two Ways of Salvation in the Indian Context," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 45, 3 (2006), 257.

[29] Penumaka, "Luther and Shankara," 260.

I am in agreement with Emma Mawdsley, according to whom, given all of this, it does not mean that the potentially positive relationship between Hinduism and ecology is de-legitimised, but that extracting idioms and understandings of Hinduism(s) must be understood as a complicated enterprise.[30] There has been substantial work done in the context of globalisation, feminism and genres of resistance on the part of women, such as within the context of resistance and activism surrounding the Chipko movement. Critical scholars, like Vandana Shiva, have done important work that sought to contextualize the many ecological crises in India within the frame of a western capitalistic society that is eroding into the traditional lifestyles of the subaltern rural peoples in India. However, Vandana Shiva herself has come under fire from other feminist critics who point out that she (Shiva) offers a discourse of Hindu women that essentialises them as a category within a dominant Sanskritised Hindu discourse. Vandana Shiva is in addition rightly criticized for what is perceived as her essentialist stance inscribing her perspective, that women are biologically closer to nature than men, so they necessarily care more about nature.

There are also numerous studies from various perspectives of sacred Hindu topography, goddess worship, nature divinities and, in more recent times, Gandhian ethics and so on. The list is impressively long in terms of the kinds of studies, textual and ethnographic as well as socio-political that cover issues in Hinduism and ecology. However, many of the later, more critically positioned works have revealed the fallacies inherent in several earlier articles that have confused bio-divinity for environmental consciousness in attempting to ambitiously forge links between the Hindu religion and ecology.

There are, thus, many points of apparent contact between the Hindu religion and ecology, some more plausible than others. All, however, need to be understood as complicated exercises that offer suggestive frameworks for rapprochement rather than neat Hindu Ethic blueprints for contemporary times. For me, a plausible point of rapprochement is that of ecological feminism and the Advaita Vedānta strand of Hinduism in our attempt to offer one such suggestive framework and attempt to refract a contemporary eco-ethic. An Advaitic approach, which strives to exclude any kinds of alterity or 'other', can be brought into dialogue with an eco-feminist perspective in their bid to transcend the dualities of subject/object or 'us' (people) versus 'it' (nature). I use the word refract rather than extract because I am all too aware of the cautionary sounding of comparative religion scholars, like Larson,[31] who appeal for a rapprochement of sorts, that will allow for a discussion between two traditions rather than an extraction.

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[30] Mawdsley, "The Abuse of Religion and Ecology," 5.

The premise presented in this essay is necessarily exploratory and, like many other studies, there cannot be absolute and direct links between eco-feminism and Hinduism. Making such a claim would be as fallacious as many myopic earlier studies. However, eco-feminism is thought to bring some important conversation points to the table. First, feminist theory is felt to be particularly apposite here as there is some resonance, epistemologically and ethically, as eco-feminists point out, with the gendered oppressed world of the female as there is of the subjugated and dominated earth. Additionally, feminism (quite evidently) is not a religious tradition. We would, thus, not be culpable of attempting to extract or reductively subsume one religion into another. Second, and most importantly for our discussion, both Advaita Vedānta and ecological feminism speak about dualisms and of dualisms that need to be transcended. In Sankara's Advaita Vedānta the ultimate duality is that of the Atman-Brahman that has to be transcended through an experiential realization of *tat tvam asi.* In ecological feminism, it is the value dualisms operating in the world (equivalent of Śaṅkara's relatively real world) that have to be transcended.

Both eco-feminism and Advaita seek a self-realization, although radically differently conceived. Advaitins seek to transcend the illusory world and realize the Self or Brahman. Eco-feminists seek to transcend what is also perceived as an illusory distinction between high and low values. For one vital strand of ecological feminism is the focus on the analyses of related value dualisms in patriarchal western culture.[32]

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[31] Larson, "Discourse about 'Religion' in Colonial and Postcolonial India," 181-193.

In terms of ecological feminism, value dualisms are conceptualized as pairs of disjuncts in which each side is taken to be radically different from the other, and one is ranked as morally better based on alleged differences.[33] Likewise, within Advaita Vedānta are the dualisms of Atman and Brahman that are in a sense radically and hierarchically different on one level, at the phenomenal and relative realm, but emerge as no different once the individual attains liberation. At this point, all dualisms and embedded hierarchies are not only non-existent – they are understood as never having existed. All that is left is the Brahman. One can construct a tenuous but plausible hermeneutic link between these (relatively speaking non-existent) dualisms or ultimate disjuncts of Atman-Brahman and the so called value-laden dualisms in eco-feminism, where the dualisms and in-built hierarchies are alleged and perceived from one end as being radically discrete from each other. Within eco-feminism the aim is to transcend the value dualism that foist and foster separation and moral superiority and so retard eco-humane values and behaviours towards the surrounding environment of humans and nature. Eco-feminism claims to work through this transcendence toward a re-conceptualised Self that is not dualistic.

The failure of mainstream environmental philosophies is felt as deriving from a particular dualistic conception of self. This conception, we are told, sees the self against others and does not leave room for essential connection to others. "It instrumentalises others and treats nature as an object of the self."[34] Whilst the objective in Advaita is to transcend this world of illusion and be liberated, 'out' of this world in a sense, the objective in eco-feminism is to transcend illusory value hierarchies and attain a connected self and be more 'in' the world. Writers within eco-feministic frames of thinking, thus, propose the conception of a mutual self. A care ethic is claimed as being logically related to the conception of a mutual self and the mutual self is claimed as standing in a particular relationship of care, respect and custodianship to nature and environment.[35] Those who advocate the mutual self from an eco-feminist standpoint also insist on an ethic of care as being part of a connected concept of the self. Feminist revisions of knowledge can be seen as having also a social imperative, where knowledge is not sought for its own sake but is positioned toward interconnected action and outcomes.

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[32] Maruyama Masatsugu, "Deconstructive Ecofeminism: A Japanese Critical Interpretation," *Worldviews: Environment Culture Religion* 4, 1 (2000), 184.

[33] Masatsugu, "Deconstructive Ecofeminism," 184.

[34] Masatsugu, "Deconstructive Ecofeminism," 184.

According to the Earth Charter, what is required is exactly this sort of attention to maintaining ecological integrity, promoting democracy, socio-economic justice, peace and non-violence, all of which are concurrently also the aim of eco-feminists. Thus, these are worthy goals from an ecological feminist standpoint. In addition, the Charter underpins the link between preserving ecological integrity and promoting moral treatment of human beings and that of nature as being interconnected enterprises.[36] In terms of particular strands of Hinduism, Coward states that the activist Guha's activism critique is based on the 'Hindu' perspective that people are not separate from, but constitute an interconnected part of the nature. Therefore, ecological goals are best served not by separating people from nature but by ensuring that people live intimately with nature in ways that support the diversity and harmony of the whole, conceived of in this instance in terms of Guha's thesis as being, God's body. Francis Clooney argues:

> (T)he Hindu Vedānta theology, as represented here by the nondualist (advaita) school of Śaṅkara (8th century C.E.), is an ally that supports a theological critique of some major features of modern thought and shows a way to re-establish referentiality.[37]

He adds that Vedānta challenges theology to review and rethink its own intersection with modernity.[38] The point of re-establishing referentiality is intriguing. It implies re-establishing our referentiality with Brahman. This exegetical process is one that is poised as being able to converse with the eco-feminists in their quest to establish a mutual self. Of course, the danger inherent in such a mutual placing of Advaita self and eco-feminism self is to imply that one is talking about the same 'self', when quite obviously they are. It is more the notion of duality and non-duality in

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[35] Masatsugu, "Deconstructive Ecofeminism," 185.

[36] Sarah Mcfarland Taylor, "Reinhabiting Religion: Green Sisters, Ecological Renewal, and the Biogeography of Religious Landscape," *Worldviews* 6, 3 (2002), 227.

[37] Clooney, "Vedanta, Theology, and Modernity," 402.

[38] Clooney, "Vedanta, Theology, and Modernity," 402.

Advaita and eco-feminism that we seek to place mutually in a space of dialogue.

Many western philosophers and social and environmental commentators continue to see the system of non-duality in Hindu religions and philosophies as an important resource in ecology. They see it as a natural expression of reverence for all things.[39] There appears to be, however, seemingly justifiable criticism against attempts to link the negative theology[40] of Advaita with (positive) 'environmental' thinking. The claim is that Advaita Vedānta is world negating, advocating a negation or, put differently, transcendence of all categories in this perceived relative realm. Critics point out that such world negation is far from inducing environmental compassion where social and environmental welfare is overthrown for soteriological fulfilment. This is a fairly substantial charge given the fact that the value dualisms within eco-feminism discourse quite obviously refer to the environmental ethics within what the Śaṅkarite thinking would conceive of as the phenomenal realm.

While the 'oneness doctrine' and its ecological implications have been noted by environmentalists looking at religious material and religious resources, Narayanan is of the opinion that the recent work of Lance Nelson shows how the Advaita conceptual system does not promote eco-friendly behaviour and asserts that the non-dual doctrine as presented by the philosopher Śaṅkara presents, in actual fact, a functional dualism. For Nelson, Śaṅkara does not see any spiritual value inherent in nature. Nelson demonstrates that this philosophy, in fact, devalues nature and concludes that this is not the kind of non-dualism that those searching for an eco-ethic and for ecologically supportive modes of thought might wish to pursue,[41] and questions the celebrated holism of Hinduism, which supposedly stands in opposition to the transcendental dualism of the Semitic religions. Mawdsley tells us that these problems urge prudence in conceptualising a relationship between Hinduism and "pro-environmental values, attitudes or behaviours."[42] The claim of critics like Nelson is that the philosophies of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja are relevant to those who seek liberation but are not to be seen as being guides to everyday behaviour. They further claim that Hindu communities and customs are established, not on the sense of oneness or equality found in *mokṣa* but on many other socially embedded hierarchies and stratifications based on gender, caste, age, economic class, etc.

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[39] Penumaka, "Luther and Shankara," 255.

[40] Penumaka, "Luther and Shankara," 257.

[41] V. Narayanan, "One Tree Is Equal to Ten Sons: Hindu Responses to the Problems of Ecology, Population, and Consumption," *Journal of Academy of Religion* 65, 2 (2002), 295.

[42] Mawdsley, "The Abuse of Religion and Ecology," 6.

The texts that deal with *mokṣa* or liberation are primarily concerned with ontological issues such as the nature of Reality, or Brahman and Atman, and soteriological concerns of realizing that Brahman. As the dharma texts traditionally deal with ethics, the charge is that the *mokṣa* texts do not focus much on ethics or righteous behaviour in this world. Theological and certain philosophical texts focus on weaning one away from the secular pursuit of happiness to what is considered to be the ultimate goal of liberation from this life. Narayanan informs us:

> It is important to keep this taxonomy in mind, because theological doctrines do not necessarily trickle down into dharmic or ethical injunctions; in many Hindu traditions, in fact, there is a disjunction between dharma and *mokṣa*.[43]

The claim is that there is a fundamental opposition between *mokṣa*, which in effect is release, from the realm governed by dharma or ethics. The assertion is that dharma texts promote righteous behaviour on earth, and *mokṣa* texts encourage one to be detached from such concerns.[44] However, such a reading of Advaita is perhaps glossing over other alternative readings that point out that, before one can realize the non-duality of Brahman, one must first have met all the ethical requirements of the Hindu scriptures, including the ecological requirements specified by the Karma Theory. Harold Coward states that it may well appear so:

> Śaṅkara's prescription for release from this state of ignorance that causes our continued re-birth is to existentially realize the radical separation of our true self (ātman) from nature or *māya*... The danger in all of this from an ecological perspective is that it could lead one to assume that what happens in the world of nature does not matter. Since *māya* or the world ultimately does not exist, it is not worth worrying about in ethical terms.[45]

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[43] Narayanan, "One Tree Is Equal to Ten Sons," 296.

[44] Narayanan, "One Tree Is Equal to Ten Sons," 297.

[45] Coward, "Hindu Spirituality and the Environment," 55.

The Advaitic treatment of Self is hierarchical in nature, seeking to liberate itself beyond the incarnate 'everyday-life' Self. The historical Self, with a constructed autobiography – is 'erased' when the Ātman realizes its oneness with Brahman. There is, however, as Coward shows, at this point, yet another level of spiritual realization that lies beyond the ethical, articulated as direct union with Brahman. It is at this final level that the world with it concomitant ethical environmental concerns are left behind, when they cease to exist.[46] Some commentators may well point out that one does not necessarily have to be a so-called 'good human being' or perform ethical deeds in order to qualify for salvific release within the soteriological framework of Advaita Vedānta. This is unlike theistic theological and philosophical systems that prescribe dharmic or ethical acts as preparatory for 'working' toward and attaining liberation.

However, it is perhaps simplistic to hold that spiritual realization lies completely outside any ethical consideration in Advaita Vedānta. Although Advaita does speak of a radical ontological distinction between absolute consciousness (Brahman) and modified consciousness (Ātman), for Śaṅkara this relative phenomenal world is very real from the side of the aspirant seeking *mokṣa* or liberation.

Almost all epistemologies are based on a paradigmatic partition between the subject and the object. Arvind Sharma articulates that this division is fundamental to all conventional epistemologies, inasmuch as it is in concert with common sense. According to such an epistemology, the subject or the individual as a psychosomatic identity is to be clearly differentiated from what he or she perceives namely, the object.[47] Sharma also draws attention to the point that even though Advaita Vedānta is generally considered an idealistic school of philosophy from an ontological perspective, its epistemology is realistic. "Advaita Vedānta claims some kind of reality even for objects of illusion." "To be perceived is *to be*."[48] Thus, it is only when *mokṣa* has been attained there comes the realization that none of that is or was ever (ultimately) real. It is only at this juncture, as Harold Coward points out, the world, with its cluster of ethical environmental concerns is 'left behind' and it ceases to exist.[49]

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[46] Coward, "Hindu Spirituality and the Environment," 59.

[47] A. Sharma, "Who Speaks for Hinduism?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68, 4 (2000), 757.

[48] Sharma, "Who Speaks for Hinduism?" 756.

[49] Coward, "Hindu Spirituality and the Environment," 59.

It is through the classic exegete of the double negation of *neti*, *neti* (not this, not this) that one is said to arrive at the realization of what is Real. The purpose, simplistically put, is to realize that ultimately all, except Brahman, is illusory. The double negation can possibly be refracted out of the soteriological context for the purpose of appropriation into the eco-feminist's aim to negate value dualisms that carry embedded hierarchies that polarize people and nature, and groups of people (for example, male against other groups of people, or females). One suggests that what the "'not this', 'not this'" methodological tool can do, is offer a way to question all that appears to be objectively or logically, or empirically, *valid*, by attempting to rationally sustain a kind of disbelief in the face of what is or rather what appears to be.

This is perhaps not as esoteric as it sounds. The methodological tool of negation can perhaps, be taken out of its soteric context and experimented with in a social context. Feminism and feminist thinking often work within the theoretical perspectives of social constructionism that reveal that the so-called realities, race and ethnic groups, sex and gender roles, values-determining attitudes, and behaviours towards the environment, etc., are cultural and, in certain instances, colonially and imperially constructed and made to appear as objective givens in society. Indeed, the very environment itself emerges as a cultural construct as shown in many ethnographic studies, such as those of Tomalin, Mawdsley and others. At the heart of Advaitic negation is the awareness that, on some level, all that we accept as being true may only be constructs that can be deconstructed and *dis*-assembled in as much as they were *con*structed.

There is some resonance here with the work of contemporary figures such as the American spiritual teacher Byron Katie, although she does not refer to herself by those labels. Her methodology is startlingly simple and contained in the petite but powerful question, "Is it true?" We are meant to subject everything, but perhaps more-so to that which cause us stress and difficulty (thoughts, beliefs, values, opinions, the so-called facts) and that which we hold as true up to the naked interrogation of "Is it true?", "Can you absolutely know that it is true?" and, finally, "Who would you be without that thought?" In other words, who would we be if we *did not* hold that to be *true*? It is outside the scope of this study to explore the profound ramifications for the attainment of peace of mind of this simple methodology at attempting to arrive at what is truly true. However, what we draw attention to is that, both feminism, of which eco-feminism is a vital branch, and Advaita are well aware of *constructs* that masquerade as the 'real thing'. Again, the nature of the constructs and how they are constructed varies, ontologically and epistemologically, in Advaita and eco-feminism. The intention is not to conflate the notion of constructs, but to, as has been the endeavour throughout the essay, to create a space for dialogue. In so doing, the aim is to see how ancient scriptures can be refracted into contemporary idioms that are possibly spiritual but also practically applicable outside of a spiritual or religious contextual situatedness. The individual conversation partners of Advaita and eco-feminism are well-known in the west. Advaita has, especially of all the religio-philosophical systems from the Indian subcontinent, taken the strongest hold on the 'western' mind.

Writing on whether the Advaita is to be grasped as a theology or philosophy, Penumaka rightly states as follows:

> Advaita *Vedānta* – whether regarded in modern times as a philosophical system, a theology, or more precisely, a theology that is essentially exegetical – remains today, as it has since the nineteenth century, the school of Hindu thought that has been the best known to Western students of Indian religious history.[50]

Śaṅkara himself describes the Brahman in *non*-theistic as opposed to *a*-theistic terms. There are also categories of feminist thinkers that claim belief in a God as well as those that claim to be humanistic and understand their social consciousness as deriving from principles of humanism. The hermeneutics of transcending the Ātman-Brahman can be embraced within either theological or philosophical referents. Eco-feminists can consider themselves in engaging in either a purely ethical or philosophical exercise. For those feminists who profess to explore the process of transcending value dualisms for personal spiritual growth, Advaita does offer a space to dialogue and a particular means to exclude alterity within a contemporary context.

6. Conclusion

It should be clear that while there appears to be, indeed, a wealth of eco-caring and eco-friendly knowledge and a sense of bio-divinity and ecological wisdom in the multiple traditions that go by the generic of Hinduism, and conceptual and exegetical insights and tools in the religio-philosophical traditions such as Advaita, it is nevertheless a complicated exercise to refract ideas and understandings out of their matrix of historical and cultural, and political embeddedness. As the discussion has attempted to show, bio-divinity, a feature of many early, notably South Asian and South East-Asian religious traditions, and is not to be subsumed under the rubric of 'religious environmentalism', which is a far more recent development, both bio-divinity and religious environmentalism trace back to discrete intellectual lineages of thought and are/were informed by particular historical trajectories. The sustained refrain of this study is that not much is to be gained by a contemporary audience confronted with the realities of global environmental catastrophes by a *mere pointing out* that bio-divinity is a feature of religions like Hinduism. For, there exists, in particular instances like the environmental plight of the (revered) river Ganges, a quantum chasm between what is claimed as being in the canonical texts, about the earth and her precious waters, and how one actually behaves towards these resources.

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[50] Penumaka, "Luther and Shankara," 259.

Thus, given the complexities and polysemic voices and traditions within Hinduism, all equally legitimate to their own categories of adherents, we want to isolate dynamic strands of thinking both from Hinduism and Eco-feminism so that a dialogue can be initiated and positioned that can find contemporary meaning for the ears of activists, spiritual or otherwise, as well as the lay communit(ies). What has been offered here is a suggested framework for bringing together in dialogue, the non-dualistic Advaita and eco-feminism, both seen as working toward transcending dualisms and attaining to what they (each in their individual conceptual frameworks) refer to as a 'mutual self'. It is dialogue, rather than an essentialist conflation or superficial extraction from Hindu ritual or philosophical sources that holds the hope of transformative change.

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THE INNER AND OUTER NATURE IN DAOISM

Maja Milčinski[◆]

1. Introduction

This article elaborates on the philosophical dimensions of the inner field: the sphere of purification, meditation, cultivation, and freedom as they were practised in Daoism.[1] The introspective methods of the Daoist *nei guan* are discussed as the initial step on the path of realization of 'Voidness'. The ontological dimension of the cessation of all thoughts is taken into consideration. The method of *tzuo wang* (sitting and forgetting) introduces the problem of mind/body and its relation to the soteric practices of Daoism. Various meditative techniques and the methods of achieving unification with the Dao, the field of inner nature and freedom, must be critically examined with regard to the concept of nature as such. The paper does not aim at giving some solid arguments but follows one of the ways in which the debate on nature has been cultivated in a non-European, namely, the Daoist tradition. Rather, it is a meditation and a self-critical analysis of the state in which we are in developing the tools appropriate for solid dialogues between different cultures, historical and political backgrounds. It takes the Daoist way as a focus on self-reflection about the possibilities of strategies of achieving inner nature and self-awareness in the global context.

The methodological challenge of the topic focuses on the possibilities of a philosophical dialogue in the realms which include spiritual training and the hermeneutical problems of such an undertaking. Since 'meditation' in the Daoist context is something completely different from any form of Cartesian meditation, this poses some additional questions which have to be answered. In the Daoist context, meditation is far from being an otherworldly undertaking, but is rather the most here-

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[1] In this article, the Pinyin transcription for Chinese characters has been used; therefore, Daoism instead of the older transcription Taoism.

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and-now-ish liberating practice. However, the ontology based on it derives from the possibility of overcoming desires, including the desire for life and to stop the usual thinking process, which, in its European context, is connected to life itself. Therefore, for some European exegetes, the process of meditation means a threat to the essence of the life process itself, which in its original context is rather a life-attesting than a life-denying dimension. Such debate on nature invites us to a higher level of understanding and experiencing the reality, the level of regenerative consciousness in which the mind encounters the diverse phenomena of the world (not only the mundane world, of course). What remains mysterious, misty, appealing primarily to the reader's feelings and intuition, hence completely renouncing a "clear logical" image, acquires with the apostles of Daoist voidness a less subtle form. A step into subtler realms of understanding is possible through a shift from rationally-discursive understanding of certain phenomena to intuitive experiencing of them, through direct experiential contacts with surrounding nature and one's own inner nature.

When the deeper state of logic and unblemished truth is reached, the state of freedom and ecstatic joy in the land between dreams and waking may be experienced – the experiential truth of the unity with people and nature, the spiritual oasis, the field of one's real inner nature is touched upon. What Zhuang Zi, as well as various Buddhist visualizations teach us is that when the dreams are vivid enough for the dreamer not to realize that he/she is not awake, we must admit that it is possible that our entire experience (including all that we regard as true or real) is nothing but a part of our dreaming imagination. It is an unconscious reservoir for the understanding that we can grasp in the land between sleep and waking and on the basis of extra-logical perception. We create our intimate environment on the basis of our own fears, joys, and resentments. In this context of spiritual ecology, the problem of how and where to search for the Truth becomes even more vital. The inner field in Daoism shows the possibilities and limits of various methods for the attainment of regenerative mentality and the ecological conditions that we ourselves very often limit by not-recognizing the treasures of the mysterious union between the human being and the cosmic environment – the field of spiritual quality and freedom.

2. Body and Inner Nature

Ideas about the human body mirrored (and were themselves mirrored) in ideals about body politics in Greece as well as in China. The analogies between the macrocosm and microcosm were quite usual in the classical philosophical texts like Plato's *Republic* ("healthy state") as well as in the Chinese texts of the Warring States period (*Lushi Chunqiu*) or in *Huangdi neijing*. Political metaphors of health were never just metaphors, because the ideal political order was almost always understood as the natural order. Reproducing the body politics in the fleshy body was understood not as re-inscribing a set of arbitrary social conventions, but as the quest to embody cosmic design, to align oneself with nature and the divine. Health was, therefore, never entirely an individual affair, since personal order or disorder cannot be isolated from cosmic order or disorder and, therefore, human possibilities are shaped by contexts. In traditional Chinese medicine, sickness was conceived mainly as imbalance or disharmony, discord between macrocosm and microcosm (or as an intrusion from without). The methodology is based on the Daoist notion of *wu-wei* (the absence of intentional action) through which the primal Dao (primal unified energy without name or form) can be reached. This is not accessible through pure human effort. To refine vitality into energy, energy into spirit, spirit into space, and shatter space to merge with the *Dao* is the way of self-cultivation.

As for the "paradox of liberation," it should be mentioned that the rules of Daoist yoga hygiene are not only all-restrictive, but are few and simple and as such are supposed to be liberating since in the process they should free us from a large number of restrictions we have consciously or unconsciously placed upon ourselves. The self imposed austerities are transcended so that our own power, with which we can be useful and enjoy life, can manifest itself – these two dimensions are compatible from the yogic perspective of the restoration of biochemical balance. It is based on the right body-mind-spirit perspective and on the well-balanced course of physical, mental, moral, and spiritual regime, which is also the basis of the self-cultivation methods in Daoism.

The credo of the Daoists is that we have to take care of our body but should not develop hate or love for it. Much more important is to understand the right way and equanimity towards the body, since this will help us to overcome our ego and to keep centred on the way of liberation, salvation. Body is our supreme cognitive instrument, but if we want to overcome the troubles, which are inherent to any existence, we have to practise keeping ourselves well-balanced on the spiritual way to salvation and get to know our body in all its dimensions: as a metaphysical force as well as a nexus of paradigmatic energies which enable us to get to know ourselves (inner nature) and our place in the world (outer nature).

They should also not be based on repression but should be open to the methods that can change and redirect the course of emotions on a positive way and enable us to adapt successfully to the varying conditions of life or situations in psychosomatic relationships with ourselves or others and help us to reach a proper evaluation of life situations. This is the supreme wisdom of the *Dao de jing* (chapter 10):

> In nourishing the soul and embracing the One /…/
> In concentrating your breath and making it soft /…/
> In cultivating and cleaning your profound mirror /…/
> Give birth to them and nourish them.
> Give birth to them but don't try to own them;
> Help them to grow but don't rule them.[2]

The final stage of Chinese philosophical cultivation and spiritual pursuits is the unification of human spirit and the natural spirit (*tian ren he yi*). When the individual spirit becomes part of the natural spirit and contaminated human thoughts have been cleansed and purified, it is manifest on the bio-energetic and bio-electrical levels.

3. Spiritual Ecology in Daoism

"Sitting and forgetting" and "fastening the spirit" are the ways of attaining the salvific powers prescribed by Zhuang Zi. This is the spiritual practice which enables one to attain the mental composure necessary for reaching the universal locus of soteriology which is deep within us. The inner nature is our reservoir of freedom which is also the freedom from all preconceived theories. It encroaches upon the subversive dimensions of the meditative techniques which are to prevent us from developing attachments. On the other hand, the outer nature is the field where the esoteric mode of human experience is realized. By distancing ourselves from the trivial pedantries of society, we may become a part of the transformative process. This, however, is possible only by transcending the self. "Forget things, forget Heaven, and be called a forgetter of self. The man who has forgotten self may be said to have entered Heaven."[3]

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[2] Lao-Tzu, *Te-Tao Ching*, trans. Robert G. Henricks, New York: Ballantine, 1989, 62.

The Reality in Daoism is not being but voidness, change. The nature is the realm of liberating process which is possible in the field of perfect tranquillity. The inner nature of man is tranquil. This is the nature which he has endowed with at birth.

> The men of ancient times who practised the Way employed tranquillity to cultivate knowledge. Knowledge lived in them, yet they did nothing for its sake. So, they may be said to have employed knowledge to cultivate tranquillity. Knowledge and tranquillity took turns cultivating each other, and harmony and order emerged from the inborn nature.[4]

In Daoism, inner and outer natures are one. The various meditative techniques bring us in contact with the creative forces of the Dao. Detached tranquillity is the precondition for manifestation of the supra-conscious and subliminal creative intuition which brings us in contact with the essential spirit of Dao. Freedom is the state without internal constraints; therefore, the field of sublime freedom in the form of universal energy of Dao which is cultivated in the very core of human existence liberated from delusions and entanglements. Virtue, however, is an important inner potency, instrumental for reaching the unity between the humans and the myriad phenomena. Animate and inanimate things, as well as heaven and earth, resonate with the human realm in the interdependence and interconnectedness of everything.

> Wipe out the delusions of the will, undo the snares of the heart, rid yourself of the entanglements to virtue; open up the roadblocks in the Way. Eminence and wealth, recognition and authority, fame and profit – these six are the delusions of the will. Appearances and carriage, complexion and features, temperament and attitude – these six are the entanglements of virtue. Rejecting and accepting, taking and giving, knowledge and ability – these six are the roadblocks of the Way. When these four sixes no longer seethe within the breast, then you will achieve uprightness; being upright, you will be still; being still, you will be enlightened; being enlightened, you will be

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[3] Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968, 132-33.

[4] Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 171.

> empty; and being empty, you will do nothing, and yet there will be nothing that is not done.[5]

The spiritual challenge of the Daoist notion of nature and freedom is its credo that freedom may not necessarily be achieved in the far out retreat from the world but rather in our own spiritual environment. This is the inner field of our intellectual, spiritual, and supra-physical environment which by the proper techniques can be cleaned of the illusionary dust of the world. The perfect freedom is based on the real understanding of the miracle of nature and life which is the unity, harmonious interconnectedness of physical, mental, spiritual, and supra-physical levels of our being. Such understanding is based on the liberation from knowledge. Hence, the Daoist demand for abandoning knowledge for the purpose of achieving the true understanding.

> Eliminate sageliness, throw away knowledge,
> And the people will benefit a hundredfold.
> Eliminate humanity, throw away righteousness,
> And the people will return to filial piety and compassion.
> Eliminate craftiness, throw away profit,
> Then, we will have no robbers and thieves.[6]

This is the basis on which true awareness is achieved and attachments are overcome. The soteriological techniques and teachings about the transience of everything may prevent us from developing attachments. The dimension of non-attachment is the common ground of Daoism and Buddhism that teach about difference between love and attachment which is the basis of attaining true freedom. Everything around and inside us is the expression of supreme consciousness, Dao; you can love it but not develop the attachment. Being attached to supreme consciousness but not to its particular manifestation is the basis of spiritual ecology in Daoism which includes also our imaginary environment. The Daoist does not focus on the elimination of the external obstacles, but cultivates various techniques of transformation of the ego which could be in conflict with external limitations.

> The reason why I have great distress
> Is that I have a body.
> If I had no body, what distress would I have?

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[5] Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 259.
[6] Lao-Tzu, *Te-Tao Ching*, 71.

> Therefore, to one who values acting for himself over acting on behalf of the world,
> You can entrust the world.
> And to one who in being parsimonious regards his person as equal to the world,
> You can turn over the world.[7]

The wise person finally reaches the state of egolessness and supreme equanimity which protects him/her against favourable or unfavourable events which are all equally disturbing and experienced as such since one possesses the body as a seat of the ego or consciousness. As long as we acknowledge the body and consciousness and do not cultivate the body-mind unity we experience distresses. Therefore, the Daoist does not criticize the environment and demand the expansion of the space in which his will can be realized and his needs satisfied, but he is rather critical of himself and is establishing and cultivating the harmony with one's environment. Limitation and the limited one are, therefore, interrelated and co-dependent. The individual's wishes and ambitions define also one's limitations and compulsions. The more one wishes or expects, the less free one is since there are more limitations that one has to overcome for the satisfaction of the wishes or realizations of the expectations. There is an obvious link between the ego and its limitations. The ego is not something given by nature but it is rather one's own conception of the Self. By perceiving ourselves as such and such, we become like that and also define our own limitations and entrapments.

The Daoist achievement of freedom is, therefore, a protection for the people who might become victims of their own notions of themselves by losing contact with their innate nature. The Daoist cultivation of egolessness brings one into harmony with the Dao, the interdependence between the inner and the outer nature. "Therefore, I say, the Perfect Man has no self; the Holy Man has no merit; the Sage has no fame."[8] He is unselfish, without personal "identity," he is part of nature and not an individual separated from it. There is no difference between inner and outer realm. To achieve this stage one has to renounce one's own ego by "fastening one's spirit, sitting and forgetting, forgetting one's self, losing the Self" (Zhuang Zi). This is the birthplace of freedom. The identification with Dao is the renouncement of Ego, self, which does not incorporate a self-repression, rather the forgetting of the self. In this process, there is nothing left which could suffer under repression.

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[7] Lao-Tzu, *Te-Tao Ching*, 65.

[8] Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 32.

4. Conclusion

The topics discussed above might put into contrast various Asian and European ways of approaching the problems of inner and outer nature and embodying them as well. These are also the questions decisive for anyone dealing with different cultures in any way since they show multiple ways of constructing a coherent sense of one's own Selfhood and one's place in the Nature. The quoted texts also bring into focus methods of transcending the Self for the sake of creative living and attitude to others and to oneself. Special emphasis is given on the mind-body continuum in Chinese tradition which does not leave any room for the devaluation of physical, emotional, and mental aspects but understands them necessary in reaching Oneness with the nature and our innermost core.

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PLACE OF THE SACRED IN SHAPING ECO-PERSPECTIVES

Vincent Sekhar◆

1. Introduction

A casual glance at *The Hindu Survey of the Environment 2008*[1] would reveal in summary the challenges humanity faces in India on the issue of conservation of natural resources, bio-diversity, and the environment. Waste management and pollution control remain a challenge for years despite the Central Pollution Control Board and several organizations like *Greenpeace*[2] undertaking campaigns and offering parameters to minimize and to manage waste. Electronic trash and biomedical refuse are ever increasing, resulting in infections and other hazards. The climatic change and the growing earth warming is a widely researched fact due to higher carbon emissions from human activity. Harnessing the power of the sun, like in solar energy, is becoming revolutionary in lighting billions of lives. Wetlands and water banks, which provide innumerable services to local communities, are under threat; further, evidences indicate that solutions to protect coastal ecosystems are far from satisfactory. Needless to say, sustainable transport future may land us in undertaking fewer, shorter trips, greater use of public transport, number of walking and cycle trips. Problems abound on the issue of Genetically Modified crops, its health and other risk factors, conservation of forest and wild life, extinction of

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[1] The Hindu, *The Hindu Survey of the Environment 2008*, Chennai: Kasturi & Sons Ltd., 2008.

[2] *Greenpeace* is an independent global campaigning organisation that acts to change attitudes and behaviour, to protect and conserve the environment, and to promote peace by catalyzing energy revolution, defending the oceans, protecting the world's ancient forests, creating a toxic-free future, campaigning for sustainable agriculture, etc. Greenpeace is present in 40 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific. Greenpeace has been campaigning against environmental degradation since 1971, exposing environmental criminals and challenging governments and corporations when they fail to live up to their mandate to safeguard the environment and the future. See, http://www.greenpeace.org/international/about.

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rare species, etc. States and non-governmental organizations engineer solutions to these problems with little success.

2. Environment vis-à-vis Religion: Crossing Boundaries

Can religion offer anything substantial in this regard? The purpose of this article is to show that humanity has the will and power to divert from its suicidal path, provided it becomes religiously and morally sensitive, listening to the primordial Words and acting on them. Some people argue that religions cannot offer solutions to problems which are political or economic in nature. True, as long as human beings do not listen to themselves, their conscience! All religious scriptures are bound by time and space and, indeed, no religious scripture is free from political or economic contexts and interpretations. Des Jardins says: "It is impossible to find an important environmental issue that does not cross boundaries between the sciences, economics, public policy, law, medicine, engineering, and so forth."[3] In a similar way, it seems that it is impossible to pick up issues, whether environmental or political or economic or public life that do not cross boundaries between them and religion.

As "society's conscience and moral sentinel," religion has "a legitimate interest in secular affairs and cannot be excluded from their conduct… [It] keeps an eye on the general quality of collective life, to alert few citizens to its disturbing trends, and to summon them to their basic values and ideals; and the best way to attain that objective is to persuade, to inspire, to criticize, and occasionally to agitate."[4] Religions do have a capacity to motivate human beings for inward looking and to guide them when especially they are at a crossroads. As Sullivan points out, we cannot ignore religion because religion explores the "essential wellsprings of human motivation and concern that shape the world as we know it. No understanding of the environment is adequate without a grasp of the religious life that constitutes the human societies which saturate the natural environment."[5] They could be a force for evil, but could also be a force for good, for better social and environmental life.

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[3] Des Jardins Jr., *Environmental Ethics*, Belmont: Wadsworth, 1993, 5.

[4] Bhiku Parekh, "The Voice of Religion in Political Discourse" in *Religion, Politics, and Peace*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999, 72, 80-81.

[5] Lawrence E. Sullivan, "Introduction" in *Jainism and Ecology: Non-violence in the Web of Life*, ed. Christopher Key Chapple, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press for the Center for the Study of World Religions, 2002, x-xi.

Religions do offer the needed confidence and guidance among people, especially in times of difficulties and turmoil, problems and challenges of life. Granting that religions have a private as well as a public role to play, it is also a fact that all that is said by religions stay as said well and for good, exhorting humans to follow them conscientiously. Many a time, religion remains sheltered in the rusty cave of human heart, be purely personal and sentimental, or perhaps an interesting domain merely for philosophical speculations, discussions, and arguments. "Religion will evaporate into arid philosophy," warns Cardinal Arinze, "if it did not grapple with concrete situations that people face in their ordinary day-to-day living."[6] Even if religions did this, it is also a fact that no one religious community is capable of handling problems of life in general and environmental problems in particular. There is a strong need for believers to draw inspiration from their own wells, their sacred Words, in order to explore the possibilities of a collective engagement. John Taylor, a Buddhist scholar and Environmentalist, believes that when people from different faith traditions work together, their differences often appear in a new light, so much so that the differences become less important than the *common ground* or *common visions*.[7]

Shared practical work can break down not only religious prejudices and barriers but ethnic and social barriers too. The goals and the methods of such a dialogue are suggested by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim. They enumerate the goals of such a meeting of religions on ecology as follows. (1) To identify and evaluate the distinctive ecological attitudes, values, and practices of diverse religious traditions, making clear their links to intellectual, political, and other resources associated with these distinctive traditions. (2) To describe and analyse the commonalities that exist within and among religious traditions with respect to ecology. (3) To identify the minimum common ground on which to base constructive understanding, motivating discussion, and concerted action in diverse locations across the globe; and to highlight the specific religious resources that comprise such fertile ecological ground, i.e., within scripture, ritual, myth, symbol, cosmology, sacrament, and so on. (4) To articulate in clear and moving terms a desirable mode of human presence with the earth; in short, to highlight means of respecting and valuing nature, to note on what has already been actualized, and to indicate how best to achieve what is desirable beyond these examples. (5) To outline the most significant areas, with regard to religion and ecology, in need of further study; to enumerate questions of highest priority within those areas and propose possible approaches to use in addressing them.[8]

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[6] Francis Cardinal Arinze, *Religions for Peace: A Call for Solidarity to the Religions of the World*, London: Doubleday, 2002, 11.

[7] John Taylor, "Towards Right Living: Interfaith Cooperation for Equitable and Sustainable Development" in *Ecological Responsibility: A Dialogue with Buddhism*, ed. Julia Martin, New Delhi: Tibet House & Sri Satguru Publications, 1997, 167-168.

They also critically state in a summary form the perspectives of different religious traditions on Nature, along with our obligations and responsibilities to it:

> The worldviews associated with the Western Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: They are dominantly human-focussed morality, largely anthropocentric, nature is viewed as being of secondary importance. This is being reinforced by strong sense of the transcendence of God above nature. On the other hand, the covenantal tradition of the Hebrew Bible draws on the legal agreements of biblical thought which are extended to all of creation. Sacramental theology in Christianity underscores the sacred dimension of material reality, especially for ritual purposes. Incarnational Christology proposes that because God became flesh in the person of Christ, the entire nature order can be viewed as sacred. The concept of humans as vice-regents of Allah on earth suggests that humans have particular privileges, responsibilities, and obligations to creation… There are numerous traditions in Hinduism which affirm particular rivers, mountains, or forests as sacred. In the concept of *līlā*, the creative play of the gods, Hindu theology engages the world as a creative manifestation of the divine. Later Mahayana schools of Buddhism, such as Hua-yen, underscore the remarkable interconnection of reality in such images as the jewelled net of Indra, where each jewel reflects all the others in the universe. Likewise, the Zen gardens in the East Asia express the fullness of the Buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) in the natural world. Socially engaged Buddhism has been active in protecting the environment in both Asia and the United States. The seamless interconnection between the divine, human, and natural world that characterizes Confucianism and Taoism has been described as an anthropocosmic worldview…

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[8] Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, "Series Foreword," in *Jainism and Ecology*, xxi.

To be in harmony with nature and with other humans while being attentive to the movements of the Tao (Way) is the aim of personal cultivation in both these traditions. Most indigenous peoples have environmental ethics embedded in their worldviews. The religious views at the basis of indigenous lifeways involve respect for the sources of food, clothing, and shelter that nature provides. Gratitude to the creator and to the spiritual forces in creations is at the heart of most indigenous traditions.[9]

3. Human (Sensitized) Being: The Best Steward-to-be

I have highlighted in the following pages a few specific sacred texts[10] that might be helpful to those who believe that religion has relevance in moulding human minds and hearts on issues related to our habitat, the living and the non-living.

Every religion portrays human being as the *summum bonum*, the *best* of all creation because of the transcending character, spiritual vision, intelligence, and creativity. "Blessed is human birth; even the dwellers in heaven desire this birth: for true wisdom and pure love may be attained only by man," says *Srīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.13). After all, man (and woman) is created in the *image of God*, according to Christian scriptures (Genesis 1:26). *Aitareya Upaniṣad* narrates the story of creation, in which the whole world emanates from the Self. After creating the Puruṣa with all its limbs, mouth, nostrils, skin, navel, phallus, etc., the natural world, fire, wind, water, sun, moon, regions, plants and trees, etc. enter the Puruṣa, each according to its place, becoming his speech, breath, navel, heart, sight, hearing, hairs in the skin, phallus, and so on. Finally, the Self thought, "How could these guardians exist without me? By what way shall I enter them? If, without me, speech is uttered, breath is drawn, eye sees, ear hears, skin feels, mind thinks, sex organs procreate, then what am I?" Then, the Self said: 'Let me enter the guardians.' Whereupon, opening the centre of their skulls, he entered. The door by which he entered is called the door of bliss (AU 1.1-3.12). The idea that the human person contains the whole of creation is supported by other scriptural texts as well: "The whole of existence arises in me…" (*Havejra Tantra* 8.41). "All that the

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[9] Tucker and Grim, "Series Foreword," in *Jainism and Ecology*, xxiii-xxv.

[10] Sacred texts are taken from Andrew Wilson, ed., *World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts* (A Project of the International Religious Foundation), New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993.

Holy One created in the world He created in man" (*Talmud*, Abot de Rabbi Nathan, 31). "Man is the product of the attributes of Heaven and Earth, by the interaction of the dual forces of nature, the union of the animal and intelligent souls, and the finest subtle matter of the five elements," quotes a Confucian text (*Book of Ritual* 7.3.1-7). The Jain scriptures say that one who knows the inner self knows the external world as well. One who knows the external world knows the inner self as well. (*Acarangasutra* 1.147). Each person is the microcosm of the whole universe.

Scriptures, which give the *supreme* place to human being among all created realities, also reveal that human being, who is capable of being saved, enlightened, and of achieving the highest goal of life, is, in reality, the lord of spirits. Human being could easily outshine the angels in glory and surpass them in wisdom: "When a man walks on the highway, a company of angels goes before him, proclaiming, 'Make way for the Image of the Holy One!' reveals a Judaic text (*Midrash, Psalm* 17.8). "Even the spirits are in obeisance," says a Daoist text, "for a person in concord with Unity, everything prospers; to one who has no personal interest" (*Chuang Tzu* 12). Buddha says that saints and sages, and even ordinary believers "who are intent on meditation, who delight in the peace of renunciation," are held "most dear by gods" (*Dhammapada* 181). Such mindful and perfect ones could command respect, reverence, and assistance from the heavenly spirits. They have extraordinary powers even to rebuke and cast out evil spirits in the name of God.

Such a position given to human being has also landed him in trouble! In Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), human beings are created as God's *vicegerents*, granting the blessings of dominion over created things: "Do you not see that God has subjected to your use all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, both seen and unseen?" (*Qur'an* 31.20). God blessed them, and God said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28). "Thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honour. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps. 8:3-6). The expressions such as *dominion*, *subdue*, *all things under his feet* would lose their spirit if they were understood literally as *domination* and *subjugation* of created things at their own expense. Rather, human ingenuity, creativity, and progress are to be understood in the harmony of things, life, and environment. It is for this reason, the same scriptures also point out to the idea that the whole universe is created only for the sake of the *righteous* man (*Talmud, Shabbat* 30b), who would not *forget its source* and not *deviate from their determined pattern.*

Now the trouble starts! The natural world, the community of living, laments over the sinful actions of human beings as though in *groaning travails*! (Rom. 8:19-22). *Anguttara Nikaya* rightly points out to the reasons for this phenomenon: "Since folk are ablaze with unlawful lusts, overwhelmed by depraved longings, depressed by wrong doctrines, on such as these the sky rains down not steadily. It is hard to get a meal. The crops are bad, afflicted with mildew and grown to mere stubs. Accordingly, many come to their end" (i.50). Hosea, the Old Testament prophet, proves why "the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and even the fish of the sea are taken away." He reads out the controversy with the inhabitants of the land: "There is no faithfulness or kindness, there is no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder" (Hos. 4:1-3). In one of the Avestan texts of Zoroastrianism, the soul of an ox complains: "For whom did you create me? Who made me? Fury and violence oppress me, and cruelty and tyranny. I have no shepherd other than you: then, obtain good pastures for me." And the Wise Lord replies saying, "No master has been found, no judge according to Righteousness" (*Yasna* 29.1-9). The soul of the ox and his mate pray again to God, who replies that the ox has been put in the power of the breeder and the herdsman.

The sin of ego-centrism,[11] which expresses traits like acquisitiveness, excessive possessiveness, the urge to hoard and acquire things more than needed, the impulse to outdo others, envy, and jealousy, has corroded the very relationship between the humans and the natural world. The blame lies on *God's vicegerents* in their *proper stewardship*! They need to recognize that the natural world is given to humans *as a trust* to be tended, maintained, and made fruitful. Proper stewardship manifests itself in many ways such as creating a safe environment, proper management of natural resources, agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, and forestry, and in acts of kindness to animals in distress. There is a reference to Noah and the kind of stewardship he tended towards animals in the Ark. It is said that "for twelve months he did not sleep by night or day, because all the time he was busy feeding the animals" (*Midrash, Tanhuma, Noah* 15a)

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[11] Padmasiri de Silva, *Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Buddhism*, London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1998, 38.

Indeed, there are passages that sensitize the humans to show extraordinary concern to nature and to animals: "Buy captive animals and give them freedom" (*Tao's Tract of the Quiet Way*). "At the openings of anthills, please have trustworthy men!" (Nagarjuna, *Precious Garland*, 249-50). "Never does a Muslim plant trees or cultivate land … except for (but that is) a charity on his behalf" (*Hadith of Muslim*). "For six years you shall sow your land and gather its yield; but in the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild beasts may eat" (Exodus 23:10-11). "When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them" (Deuteronomy 20:19). "The destruction of vegetable growth is an offence requiring expiation" (*Pacittiya* 11).

Anguttara Nikaya narrates a sad story of a thoughtless person on account of whom the banyan tree, lavished with fruits, did not bear fruit any more: "Rajah Koravya had a king banyan tree called Steadfast, and the shade of its widespread branches was cool and lovely. Its shelter broadened to twelve leagues... None guarded its fruit, and none hurt another for its fruit. Now there came a man who ate his fill of fruit, broke down a branch, and went his way. Thought the spirit dwelling in that tree, 'How amazing, how astonishing it is, that a man should be so evil as to break off a branch of the tree, after eating his fill. Suppose the tree were to bear no more fruit.' And the tree bore no more fruit" (iii.368). "The Doctrine of the Mean," a Confucian text, says that only those *who are absolutely sincere* can form a Trinity along with Heaven and Earth (22).

4. Reverence for Life and Sanctity of Nature

Is anything, then, basically wanting in human freedom, will, and judgement? Every religion speaks of the sanctity of nature because nature *belongs to God* and it is *made of God*, a healthy pantheism to support our argument: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). God is both its origin and its destiny and He has not neglected any creature, whether crawling on earth or flying in air (*Qur'an* 6.38). Considering that these creatures are *nations like ourselves*, one has to regard heaven as one's father and earth as one's mother, and all things as one's brothers and sisters (Shinto's *Oracle of the*

Kami of Atsuta). No harming can, therefore, be done to any creature even though their consciousness may not be manifest. As human beings experience joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, so also are these creatures of different forms, says the Jaina *Acarangasutra* (1.28-161).

Hence, the *human ethic proper* must have provisions to revere life and sanctify nature; it must be an *ethic of Non-violence*![12] The Jain and Buddhist traditions generally focus on this. "One should not injure, subjugate, enslave, torture, or kill any animal, living being, organism, or sentient being. This doctrine of non-violence is immaculate, immutable, and eternal. Just as suffering is painful to you, in the same way it is painful, disquieting, and terrifying to all animals, living beings, organisms, and sentient beings" (*Acarangasutra* 4.25-26). In a similar fashion, Buddha admonishes his disciples: "Let creatures all, all things that live, All beings of whatever kind, See nothing that will bode them ill! May nothing of evil come to them!" Incidentally, vegetarian way of life is motivated from this ethic. "How can a *bhikṣu*," asks Buddha, "who hopes to become a deliverer of others, himself be living on the flesh of other sentient beings? Pure and earnest *bhikṣus* will never wear clothing made of silk, nor wear boots made of leather for they involve the taking of life. Neither will they indulge in eating milk nor cheese because thereby they are depriving the young animals of that which rightfully belongs to them" (*Surangama Sutra*). Hence, there is a greater need to cultivate a critical attitude to one's lifestyle and livelihood, born out of reverence towards created things, towards nature and the environment.

Nature needs to be *let free*. With a sense of humour, Taoism distinguishes a horse from a man: "A horse or a cow has four feet. That is Nature. Put a halter around the horse's head and put a string through the cow's nose, that is man" (*Chuang Tzu* 17). The cleverness in human beings seems to have taken advantage of the beauty and power of nature, whereas it needs to be praised and worshipped as the source of life and sustenance. No sacred text is more apt to subscribe to this point than the long prayerful reading of *Bhūmi Sūkta* (in praise of the Mother Earth) from the *Atharva Veda*: "May those born of thee, O Earth, be, for our welfare, free from sickness and waste. Wakeful through a long life, we shall become bearers of tribute for thee. Earth, my Mother! Set me securely with bliss in full accord with Heaven. Wise One, uphold me in grace and splendour" (12.1).

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[12] For more details, read the author's articles, "Implications of *Ahimsa* on Ecology: A Jaina Perspective" *Jain Journal* 28, 2 (October 1993), 93-100; "Significance of Jain philosophy for Preserving Life and Environment" *Eco-Dynamics of Religion: Thought for the Third Millennium*, ed. Augustine Thottakara, Bangalore: Journal of Dharma & Dharmaram Publications, 2000; and "Give away Violence, Preserve Life: Contemporary Call of the Sramana Religions," *Journal of Dharma* 25, 2 (April-June 2000).

Eventually, those who have attained the spiritual heights are acknowledged to have developed in their personal lives such noble attitudes toward nature: loving kindness to all forms of life, least hurt even to the least of creatures, vegetarian way of life, restraining from unwholesome speech or action, etc. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, being "aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others to kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life."[13] Padmasiri de Silva enumerates the eight-point deep ecology platform:

> (1) The flourishing of human and non-human life on earth has intrinsic value. The value of non-human life-forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human purposes. (2) Richness and diversity of life-forms are values in themselves and contribute to the flourishing of human and non-human life on earth. (3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs. (4) Present human interference with non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. (5) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease. (6) Significant change of life as condition for the better requires changes in policies. These affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. (7) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering to a high standard of living. (8) Those who subscribe to the above points have an obligation, directly or indirectly, to participate in attempts to implement necessary changes.[14]

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[13] Thich Nhat Hanh, et al., *For a Future to be Possible*, Berkeley: Parralax Press, 1993, 13.

[14] de Silva, *Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Buddhism*, 128-129.

I believe that *our own sacred wells* take us to a Deep Ecology, the characteristics of which are found in a holistic, non-anthropocentric approach to life and environment. Such a Deep Ecology appreciates and respects richness and diversity of all forms of life and non-life.

5. Conclusion

The sacred texts I have indicated from various religious traditions bring out the significant interaction between the living and the non-living from ancient times, and constantly remind "our overriding faith in unlimited natural resources..."[15] They grimly reflect on our egoistic, accumulative, and competitive tendencies that jeopardize our relationship with one another, with the earth and its diverse forms of life. They are occasions for human beings to develop an attitude of peace, gratitude, and fine-tuning with nature, proposing a new way of seeing and living. Hence, our immediate concern is our *ethical* behaviour to the non-human world, which is often considered a grade lower than ourselves and, hence, could be exploited without limits. It is a fact that the natural world is more often used for our own gratification and for other scientific reasons, forgetting that "nature has intrinsic value."[16]

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[15] de Silva, *Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Buddhism*, 1.

[16] de Silva, *Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Buddhism*, 17.

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ECOLOGICAL EVIL

A Christian Response

Ajita Kullu◆

1. Introduction

Problem of evil is an age-old problem, beginning perhaps from the very first moment of human existence in this world. The existence of evil raises objections especially against the belief in the God of love. That is, the existence of evil brings forth serious threats to our belief in the existence of God. So, we are led to search for the sources of religious thought to offer some resolution to the age-old problem of evil.

According to pantheists, evil is seen as ultimately unreal as, for them, human suffering is a product of spiritual ignorance gathered in previous lives and distributed in the present according to the dictates of karma. In the dualistic religions, good and evil are two eternal and rival principles. Their duality can be overcome only by one destroying the other. In monotheistic religions, however, evil attains a personal identity. Its source is a being that has fallen from an initial good status as a result of misusing freedom of will.

The Christian thought on evil has always moved between the opposite poles of monism and dualism. Monism is the belief that there is an ultimate harmonious unity in the universe. It is based on the traditional Christian concept of the belief that God created everything and saw that it was good. There is also a belief that evil exists in the world though it is only apparent. God created human beings in his image and likeness; yet, in them we find good nature as well as evil nature. The evil nature is due to their free will to exercise the power given to them to take care of the earth and to make use of the resources in an appropriate manner. Human beings, however, due to their advancement in knowledge and development in technology, consider themselves to be more than God and, as a result, forget their freedom to use the natural resources in a responsible manner.

This aspect of negligence or superiority of human being has created a growing awareness that our world is threatened not only by inventive skills of arms race, regional conflicts, and continued injustice among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature which results in

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aggressive plundering of natural resources and progressive decline in the quality of life. More than ever, people are worried about the ways through which the natural world is being harmed and destroyed. The sense of precariousness and insecurity that such a situation engenders is a seedbed for collective selfishness, disregard for others, and dishonesty. Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past. As experts from a wide range of disciplines are studying its causes, the public in general and the political leaders in particular are becoming more and more concerned about it.

The earth's biological systems such as food chains and food habits, and its physical biological system such as water cycle and the ozone layers, are being harmed by the modern habits (such as industrialisation) of human beings. Various problems such as drought, famine, global warming, the spread of deserts, vanishing forests, pollution of the seas, the extinction of species, etc., can be seen as signs as to know that the eco-system is dying and its life-support systems are crashing. What are the causes of this phenomenon? How is it caused and how can this journey into the doomsday be reversed? These questions call us to examine our consciousness and reconcile our attitude towards earth's resources. This study is an attempt to analyze the steps that Christians have adopted in solving the ecological crisis through a rereading of the Genesis.

2. Creation in the Beginning

The preciousness of the Earth is a central idea in the Bible. God is the creator and owner of this Earth (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 24:1; Is. 48:12-13; Job. 38-40). "God called the dry land Earth, and the Waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:10). God is the giver and sustainer of all life (Ps. 104:29-30). In creation, God established order out of chaos (Gen. 1:1-34; Isa. 45:18). "The earth brought forth vegetation: plants … and trees… God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:12). "God made two great lights and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the Earth… God saw that it was good (Gen. 1:16-18). "God created … every living creature that moves … with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird… God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:20-21). "God said: 'let the earth bring forth living creatures… God made the wild animals … and everything that creeps… God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:24-25).

God created a very rich diversity of plant and animal species, a vivid testimony to his unsurpassable wisdom (Ps. 19:1-6). Every human being is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and is, therefore, of equal worth and value before him; God created humans to be his partners in caring for creation (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:6); everything God created was perfect and formed a cohesive or integrated, interconnected whole (Gen. 1; Ps. 104:5). The Spirit of God is actively involved not only in the initial act of creation but also in the reproduction of life, in the continual sustaining and renewing of the Earth (Ps. 104:30). Thus, the Bible clearly shows that God created a perfect earth, with awe-inspiring grandeur and an amazing array of biological species. He also made provisions of abundant resources to satisfy the needs of humankind and all other creatures.[1]

3. Understanding Creation

3.1. Integral Connection of Humanity with Earthly Matrix

In order to capture the flavour and meaning of the original text, the Hebrew words *adamah* and *adam* need to be translated in ways which communicate the integral connection of humanity with its earthly matrix. The word for the stuff from which the first human being is formed is *adamah*, usually translated as "ground" or "earth."[2] The words for "human" and for "ground" are, thus, connected phonetically and perhaps etymologically. The English word "human" is not the combination of *hu* with *man*; Rather, it is derived from a theoretical Indo-European root (*ghum*), meaning "earth" or "ground" from which comes Latin 'humans', meaning earth, and Old English *guma* (man). The existence of the first ancestor is personalized in the *Adam*, which means "man" in Hebrew.[3] In a profound manner, the story portrays the character of human existence in its interdependence with God, with soil, with woman, and with animal life. Both terms, *adam* and *adamaha*, stem from the root "red," meaning "grounding." He becomes a "living being" a body and spirit.[4] Similarly, the Sumerians describe the special creation of woman, called *Nit-ti* as "the lady who makes live" and "the lady of the rib." Eve's name "*Havah*," in

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[1] R. L. Sarkar, *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, 34.

[2] Anne Primavesi, *Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism, and Christianity*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, 205.

[3] Gaalyahu Cornfeld, *Adam to Daniel: An Illustrated Guide to the Old Testament and Its Background*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961, 14.

[4] Cornfeld, *Adam to Daniel*, 14.

Hebrew, resembles "*chay*" or "living"[5] (Gen. 3:20). Thus, the earth is the stage on which life is played, for human being becomes a tiller of the soil at the end of the story. Here, in this context, when we analyze the command to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth, it immediately follows the word of blessing and involves a sharing of the divine creative capacities. The study of the verb 'dominion' (Hebrew *rada*) reveals that it must be understood in terms of care-giving, even nurturing, not exploitation. As the image of God, human beings should relate to the non-human as God relates to them.[6] The command to "subdue" the "earth" (Hebrew *kabas*) focuses on the earth, particularly cultivation (Gen. 2:5, 15), which was a difficult task in those days. What is shown here is a coercive aspect in inter-human relationships (Num. 32:22, 29); no enemies are in view here. More generally, "subduing" involves development in the created order. This process offers to the human being the task of intra-creational development, of brining the world along to its fullest development, to its fullest possible creational potentials. Here paradise is not a lost state of perfection, not a static state of affairs. Human beings live in a highly dynamic situation. The future remains open to a number of possibilities in which creaturely activity will prove crucial for the development of the world.[7]

When God conveys blessings (Gen. 1:22, 2:3) God gives power, strength, and potentiality to the creatures. Such an action, therefore, constitutes an integral part of power. This image sounds very true today in a world where we have to re-invent our relationship with *adamah.* This connectedness shows that we are bodies of interacting spirit, intelligence, and matter. We are not put into the world, but we are in it. Every individual being is an intrinsic part of it and is responsible for what becomes of it.

3.2. Concept and Practice of "Power-over"

Another important concept we need to re-interpret in order to understand better the ecological crisis is "Power-over." Ecology has different models of power. *Power from Within*:[8] it re-unites spirit and body, humanity and nature, God and the world, in the name of immanent value. When matter is sacred, inherently valuable, it is seen to be empowered by the Spirit, which awakens all to a new life and brings that life to fullness. Power within is the power we sense in a seed, in the growth of a child, in writing, working, making choices, recovering health, etc. The power from within has to do with the root meaning of the word 'power', from the Late Latin root *posse* (to be able).[9] It is the power within, from the earth community, which is present as connectedness, sustenance, healing, and creating. Power within is more than a feeling, more than a flash of the individual enlightenment or insight. It involves our sense of connection with others, our knowledge of the impact we have on others. Power from within is the power that comes from the willingness to spend ourselves, to be there for others at the price of risk and effort. Therefore, it is 'power' that creates and sustains ecological community. It enables us to exercise 'power-with': the power to cooperate, to share, and to change. It also embodies a particular kind of consciousness: it is conscious of the world as a pattern of relationship between men, women, and nature, which can be shaped and shifted. It values beings, forces, and people according to their effects on others and the appropriateness of their actions. It takes account of the effects of its own actions in relation to the largest number of systems possible.

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[5] Cornfeld, *Adam to Daniel*, 16.

[6] Terence E. Fretheim, "Genesis," *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed., Leander E. Keek, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, 346.

[7] Fretheim, "Genesis," 346.

[8] Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, 219.

This is a caring form of power. It is power aligned with love. It is the combination of both power and love, which makes a community workable and sustainable. It is the combination of power and love which Christians call the Spirit, and which empowers us to shape our common future for the good of all.[10]

4. Ecological Crisis as a Problem

In order to understand the ecological problem one needs to look at the verse of Genesis, "Cursed is the ground because of you" (Gen. 3:17). The first being, Adam, lived in the garden of God (Gen. 13:10; Ezek. 28:13; 31:8; 36:35; Joel 2:3), i.e., in an environment of peace and harmony with all God's creation and nature: eco-balance in a state of symbiosis. He is to cultivate and keep the garden as a responsible steward. A limit is also set: he is not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, "for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die" (Gen. 2:17). To "die" may here mean "to be cut off" from having communion with God. Later, Adam and

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[9] Premavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, 220.
[10] Premavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, 221.

Eve were driven out of the garden for having eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree, but not killed.

In reading the account of creation, we see that Garden of God, a paradise, a symbol of *oikos*, an ecosystem in which the different species of organisms in God's creation, from the smallest to *Homo sapiens*, co-exist in a state of symbiosis, fulfilling God's plan and purpose for which they are created. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve lived in close relationship with every living creature, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, in an environment of natural beauty and splendour unspoiled by ecological degradation. Such a beautiful description of the garden of God is visualized further in the book of Ezekiel (28:13f.; 31:1-9). God himself is very much present with the whole of his creation in a human anthropomorphic way. Hence, any ecological degradation, whether in the form of imbalance in nature created by humans, discrimination and inequality in human relationships, injustice, and reckless destruction of the ecosystem or depleting the Ozone layer, is a destruction of God's creation. All these affect human existence and subsistence in God's own *oikoumene* and interfere with God's order of creation. God's creation and ecosystem must be saved if human beings have to survive.[11]

The verses describing the "curse on nature" need a closer look. Gen. 3:17-19 is often read in such a way as to suggest that "thorns and thistles" – that is, weed in general, all plants, which "get in the way" – are not a part of the created order, but a consequence of human sin. In the Middle Ages, this doctrine was expanded from biology into geology, and the very ruggedness of the earth, which so often was a burden for human attempts to move about on it, was seen as a result of the Fall. But, as our own time has shown us painfully, there are very few plants, animals, hills, or valleys, which can be regarded as weeds. The ground is cursed because we are set against it. Interestingly, the word used there for signifying "ground" is also *adamah*, suggesting that the curse pronounced on Adam is, in fact, describing a division within himself.

That division is his own inability to be in harmony with the earth, his tendency to regard his difference from nature as enmity with nature. In short, the curse describes not a quality in the earth itself, but human misuse of his dominion. An accurate reading of the Hebrew text would mean, "Cursed is the ground to you!"[12] Because of this attitude of enmity between people and nature, human beings lost their ability to be the "preserver" of the garden in which they were placed. Their misunderstanding of dominion, a dominion that issues from enmity, makes them unable to "guard" or "preserve" the life of the garden. It is this inability we still see manifested in the degradation and destruction of the Earth.

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[11] Sarkar, *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*, 41.

[12] Sarkar, *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*, 42.

The environmental crisis is often equated with the destruction of natural resources. There are thousands of examples: ozone layer depletion, climate change, land degradation, water pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, species extinction, use and misuse of biotechnology. Every day seems to bring news of some new environmental deterioration. Then, the environmental crisis is, in fact, found in the human soul. All that is happening to the environment are but symptoms of the crisis in the human component of this planetary ecosystem. Solution to the environmental crisis requires establishment of proper relationship with all of Gods' creation, both non-living and living. We may have tools and techniques that will continue to document ozone layer depletion, increase in greenhouse gasses, and radioactive plutonium release from nuclear power plants; but we can never resolve the environmental problems if we fail to understand the root cause of the crisis.

5. A Christian Response in Building the Earth

Theology, philosophy, and science speak of a harmonious, ordered universe, of a "cosmos" endowed with its own integrity, its own internal dynamic balance. This order must be respected. The human race is called to explore this order, to examine it with due care, and to make use of it without distorting its integrity.

The best moral case for a pro-active environmental policy is trusteeship and stewardship. This view is found even more widely among Christian writers. Pope John Paul II spoke of human "stewardship over nature" in 1985.[13] The Church of England General Synod, in July 1990, called for a statement on "Christian stewardship in relation to the whole of creation to engage in a critical view if human responsibility to the living environment."[14]

The popularity of the idea of stewardship of nature may stem from the upsurge in the use of the term 'stewardship' in the 1950s and 1960s. At this time, stewardship came to the forefront of the churches' campaign for more resources, largely, but also of time and talents. Stewardship campaigns took place in many churches, particularly among Methodists and Anglicans; stewardship advisors were appointed in dioceses and districts. All of these focused on the need to recognize that neither money nor time belonged to humanity, but were ultimately God's; man was responsible to God to make the best use of them. The term 'stewardship', connecting the wise use of money and talents, was widely accepted in many churches during the 1960s and 1970s when awareness of environmental problems sharply increased. The idea is seen more strongly in a speech made by Pope John Paul II, in August 1985: Exploitation of the riches of nature must take place according to criteria that take into account not only the immediate needs of people, but also the needs of future generations. In this way, the stewardship over nature, entrusted by God to man, will not be guided by short-sightedness or selfish pursuits; rather it will take into account the fact that all created goods are directed to the good of all humanity. Here, the Pope speaks of nature as 'riches' to be 'exploited',[15] but with a view to the future wellbeing of humans. Thus, the term 'stewardship' has been widely deployed in recent years to justify Christian involvement in environmental action. It is the duty of human beings to preserve the face of the earth in beauty, usefulness, and fruitfulness. Indeed, for many Christians this is the primary meaning of 'stewardship'. Furthermore, the relationship between human dominion and divine sovereignty which has emerged in the argument so far suggests that we may fruitfully correlate the ways in which God exercises His sovereignty with the ways in which human dominion is expressed. Thus, it seems natural to look to God's sustaining activity for insights into the concepts of environment stewardship. God's present activity of sustaining creation in being refers back to the original creation: it is preservation of creation from dissolution into chaos. But, at the same time, it refers to the future for the consummation of all things.

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[13] Cited in Sarkar, *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*, 153.

[14] Sarkar, *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*, 153.

The Norwegian philosopher Naess first used the term Ecosophy (deep ecology) in 1973. 'Ecosophy' derives from the Greek *oikos*, meaning "house" and *logos*, meaning knowledge; thus, ecology is employed to describe all aspects of our dwelling in the Earth Household.[16] It studies our planet in the Earth Household and concerns itself with earth wisdom. It draws on wider philosophical and religious traditions. According to Naess, there are eight principles of deep ecology. Deep ecology seeks to challenge our culture's fundamental human assumptions, especially those which have led us to accept materialism, militarism, and human domination over nature as normal human behaviours. Deep ecology seeks to understand and challenge the root of our planetary disposition. From the concept of deep ecology that Naess has established, other deep ecologists have identified a more precise platform, which specifies political values flowing from deep ecology: the primacy of wilderness, a sense of place, opposition to stewardship, opposition to industrial society, spirituality, and self-realization. Naess thinks that every religious movement, from Buddhism to Christianity, has some elements consistent with deep ecology. He suggests that everyone identifies principles of deep ecology in his her respective religious traditions.[17]

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[15] Sarkar, *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*, 153.

[16] Sarkar, *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*, 59.

There are eight basic principles in deep ecology. They are: 1) The wellbeing and flourishing of human life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purpose. 2) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizing of these values and are also values in themselves. 3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs. 4) Flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease. 5) Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive and the situation is rapidly worsening. 6) Policies must, therefore, be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present. 7) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality – dwelling in situation of inherent value – rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be profound awareness of the difference between big and great. 8) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

6. Conclusion

Human beings are relational beings and our existence becomes meaningful only in our interconnectedness. This connectedness urges us to respect and behold every creature on earth. We need to create a vision of commitment to a sustainable ecosophy and life vision, which express and explore the interconnectedness of the Spirit and created beings. They arise through the power from within and there emerges an interaction among all beings. It comes to consciousness within human communities. It is nourished by the companionship of faith and the friendship of those who call themselves believers and whose lives are clearly guided by the desire to dwell unconditionally in truth. Together, we may find a deeper awareness of the mystery of our sustenance through the earth's fertility, a mystery represented to us in the imperatives of ecological community.

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[17] Sarkar, *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*, 64.

Human being is not a finished product. However, he has been bestowed with grace and free will to realize his purpose in the world. The call of the creator is always for his good as well as the good of his creation. In Christian tradition, we have many prominent persons who did have great respect towards created beings. For example, we have Noah, the first deep ecologist, who saved the created beings from destruction; we have Prophet Joel who provided a holistic approach to ecology and environment; we have Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, who offered Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation. As a friend of the poor who was loved by God's creatures, Francis invited all creation – animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon – to give honour and praise to the Lord. 'The poor man of Assisi' gives us a striking witness that when we are at peace with God we are better able to devote ourselves to the building up of peace with all creation, which is inseparable from peace among all peoples. In turn, it is our responsibility to remind each other our serious obligation to respect and watch over them with care, in the light of that greater and higher fraternity that exists within the human family.

In our present scenario, where we experience extensive ecological evil, the Bible helps us to understand a new ecological consciousness, leading to a new ecological enlightenment. In the last two decades, there appeared a remarkable renewal in Christian philosophy as well as in Christian theology in the field of environmental ethics. The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all creation is one. We need to uphold this vision today. We need to firmly believe that we are only stewards (or, caretakers), and not masters. Hence, we need to promote life in its interconnectedness. We need to respect every being as creation of God and, thus, together uphold our world to bloom and make a place of paradise once again.

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VEDIC ETHOS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Joby Cherian◆

1. Introduction

Environment degradation has become one of the most serious global catastrophes. It has reached a point that could threaten the survival of humanity as well as other species. Individuals as well as groups of people are to be held responsible for the issues of environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources. It is true that many recent discoveries have brought undeniable benefits to humanity. However, it has become clear that the application of these discoveries in the fields of industry and agriculture has produced long-term harmful effects.

The most profound and serious indication that underlies the environmental problems is the lack of respect for life in its various forms. This is evident in many patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, and economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and the common good. On the other hand, delicate ecological balances are upset by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources. It should be pointed out that all these, even if carried out in the name of progress and wellbeing, ultimately lead to humankind's disadvantage.

As a consequence of two centuries of pollution, the earth has an insulating blanket of carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which finally acts in the manner of greenhouse, allowing heat from the sun in, but hindering its escape back out of space. This results in global warming and climate change. As a result of global warming, the seas, which have become warmer, expand; this contributes enormously to the rising sea levels. Glaciers, ice and snow cover have decreased rapidly all over the world as a result of the increased temperatures. Widespread changes in the patterns of rainfall, wind, ocean salinity and extreme weather, including waves, drought, intensity of tropical cyclones and very heavy rainfall also have been established. The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related "greenhouse effect" have now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations, and vastly increased energy needs.

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Industrial waste, burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides, coolants and propellants, all these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment. The resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands. While in some cases the damage already done may well be irreversible, in many other cases it can still be halted.

Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people understand the fact that we cannot continue to use the good of the earth as we have done in the past. The public in general and the political leaders in particular are concerned about this problem, and experts from a wide range of disciplines are studying the causes. There is a greater awareness and increasing recognition of the value of ecosystem services and environmental problem among the people.

Ecology studies the relationship among organisms and between them and their environment. Its primary concern is the relationships between people, other organisms such as plants and animals and the natural environment. Ecology deals with populations, communities, and ecosystems. The term comes from two Greek words, *oikos*, meaning 'home', and *logos,* meaning 'understanding'. Ernst Haeckel, a nineteenth-century German thinker, who invented the term, described ecology as "the domestic side of organic life."[1] There are two prominent ecological movements, such as 'deep' and 'shallow' ecological movements. Shallow ecologists are of the view that we have to protect nature and avoid environment degradation for the sake of human benefits. It is a view based on anthropomorphism. They believe that nature exists for the convenience of human beings. On the other hand, deep ecologists want to preserve the integrity of biosphere for its own sake, irrespective of the possible benefits to human beings that might follow.[2]

2. Environmental Ethos in the Vedas

Long before the emergence of ecology as a science, the ancient Indian heritage had already provided a spacious spiritual home for the environmental ethos. Throughout trackless centuries, India has provided an ample expanse of friendly space for an open and ongoing discourse of ecological ideas. In the west, the early rallying cry for environmental action came from scientists and social activists, with theologians only taking interest in the issue of late; on the other hand, in India, from the outset, there has been an appeal to traditional religious sensibilities in support of environmental issues. When we look at Indian society from a historical perspective, we realize that protection and preservation of environment has been integral to cultural and religious ethos of ancient Vedic people. The Vedic seers regarded the Earth as a sacred space for consecrated endeavours and aspirations of humankind and for the practice of restraint and responsibility. The ancient religious literature of the Vedas enshrines a holistic and poetic cosmic vision. They represent the oldest, the most carefully nurtured, the most elaborately systematized, and the most lovingly preserved oral tradition of the world. Their evocative poetry is a joyous and spontaneous affirmation of life and nature. The Vedic man established a harmony with environment because neither the world was perceived as heading towards an imminent environmental disaster or destruction nor any immediate utilitarian exigency, but through their quest for spiritual and physical symbiosis, synthesized in a system of ethical awareness and moral responsibility.

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[1] J. L. Chapman and M. J. Reiss, *Ecology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 3.

[2] Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 280.

The whole of *Ṛgveda* reflects a religion of nature, where human being is conceived as part and parcel of its natural dynamics. Vedic man was nature-centred for whom the natural phenomena arose from a divine source. Behind the wide spectrum of gods and immensely intricate ritual techniques of sacrifice, there was an insight into the natural laws of nature. The *Ṛgveda* resonates with praise hymns to the deities of the sky, earth, atmosphere, thunder, rain, sun, and wind. As the children notice and learn the events of nature without being taught, the early human beings were gifted with special inquisitive minds with which they must have started to observe closely, to make correlations among the natural phenomena by taking measures in time and space, seeking precision and accuracy. The seers who formulated the Vedic hymns lived one with nature. Nature is understood as a friend, revered as a mother, obeyed as a father and nurtured as a beloved child.

Nature is sacred because human being depends entirely on it and because of this everything is sanctified. Human being is not on the earth to conquer, dominate, and exploit, but to be an integral part of the organic whole. The gods, men, and nature formed one organic whole. None is superior or inferior. All these categories of beings were corporately responsible for maintaining and promoting the cosmic harmony. Energy and matter as well as the essence of God and human are one, the same interchangeable and when bodily life ends, human beings like every other movable and immovable thing, merge with infinity or, in modern ecological terms, matter recycled and energy are one under many interchangeable forms. In fact, even human mind is part of the cosmic soul or energy. As the Vedic seers were aware of the unity and mutual interrelation of all things and events, their experience of phenomena in the world were taken to be manifestations of a fundamental oneness. All things are seen as interdependent and inseparable parts of this cosmic whole, as different manifestations of the same ultimate reality. Thus, for them, the one reality is that which is manifest in all, which, in contemporary ecological terms, is expressed in the following dictum: "everything is related to everything else."[3]

3. The Vedic Attitude towards the Earth

The Vedic seers regarded the earth as a 'sacred space' for the consecrated endeavours and aspirations of humankind and for the practice. As no activity, whether biological, natural, human, or metaphysical, can exist outside the sphere of earth, the Vedic attitude toward earth spring from mans primal experience of being an offspring of the earth. The Vedic hymn to earth, the *Prithvi Sukta*, in the *Atharva Veda*, is unquestionably the oldest and the most evocative environmental invocation. In it, the Vedic seer solemnly declares the enduring filial allegiance of the humankind to Mother Earth. "*Matha Bhumih Putroham Prithivyah*," i.e., "the Earth is my mother, I am her son."[4] Mother Earth is celebrated for all her natural bounties and particularly for her gifts of herbs and vegetation. Her blessings are sought for prosperity in all endeavours and fulfilment of all righteous aspirations. A covenant is made that humankind shall secure the earth against all trespasses and shall never let her be oppressed.

The earth is the foundation, the basis out of which emerges all that exists and on which everything rests. The earth is the basis of life and, when considered as divine being, she always occupies a special place among the Gods. Human being is of the earth and is earthly, but the earth is not simply nature, is not merely geographical or material, it is part of human being; so, human being can no more live without the earth than he/she can live without a body. A significant poetic description about the earth, found in the *Atharva Veda*, is as follows:

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[3] M. Vannucci, *Ecological Readings in the Veda*, New Delhi: D. K. Printworld Pvt. Ltd., 1994, 64.

[4] *Atharva Veda*, 12.1.12b.

> The earth is the supreme, loving, life sustaining mother. She is beautiful, fertile, nurturing and generous. She is close to humans as their own skin. As a person's entire existence depends upon her, man is of earth, part of earth. The earth is his home. She is a merciful compassionate mother whose benign heart pours unconditional love to all, irrespective of their talents and station in life. She carries in her lap the foolish as well as the wise. She bears the death of the wicked and the wise.[5] She is the gracious leader and protector of the world.[6]

The Vedic people believed that God is immanent in the world and one can find Him in water, fire, and also in trees and herbs. Every being in this world is in reality an embodied manifestation of the external reality. Ultimately, all the differences that perceive are only apparent, because we are ignorant about the identity of all beings. For them, earth is an object of worship and not of exploitation. Investigation of the earth is of the same nature as personal introspection. To harm earth is a masochistic vice. Their worship addressed to the earth is not adoration of a creature as an absolute; rather it is the veneration of the highest value in the hierarchy of existence. Vedic people were aware of the fact that the earth as such is rich and the owner of treasures. Man's work is not to make a shift in ownership but to enjoy the blessings of the earth, because the earth is his home, his own family, his body.

4. Sacredness of Rivers and Forests

Our sages and seers stressed the sacredness of rivers, land and forests. Vedic people considered each and every phenomena of earth, such as trees, rivers, mountains, etc., as sacred (deep ecology) and believed that these phenomena are protected by their own presiding gods and goddess.

4.1. Rivers

A river for the Vedic people is a form of water, yet it has a distinct (subtle) body; there dwells a hidden energy. There is an enormous amount of material to show the antiquity and popularity of the intimate connection of goddesses with waters. In the Ṛgvedic hymn, the waters, referred to as

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[5] *Atharva Veda*, 12.1.48.

[6] *Atharva Veda*, 12.1.57.

'*Apah*' appear as a goddess, young maidens, and wives and life sustaining mothers, of *Agni*. The rivers also appear as independent goddesses. River Ganga is conceived as one who descended on this earth by some special grace. She is the mother of all rivers. The text categorically asserts that there are innumerable rivers and that all are uniformly divine. All rivers in India that meander through the land, plains, and hills embody the fecundating element that renews life. An early invocation celebrated the river goddess:

> The waters of the sky or those that flow (on the earth), those that are dug out, or those that arise from themselves, those pure and clear waters that seek the ocean as their goal – Let the waters, who are goddesses, help me here and now.[7]

The Vedic Aryans regarded water as the great cleanser and great purifier. The life-giving role of water and the importance of agriculture are expressed in the following verse. "Waters have a healing power, they drive disease away; they have a balm for all. Let them make medicines."[8] This reminds us the fact that water is a substance that has the greatest dissolving power.

4.2. Trees

From the very beginning of humankind, trees came to be revered; only later, the idea of God and worship originated in the human mind. Trees are considered to be the symbols of different gods or deities. Trees and plants are considered as living creatures endowed with personality. Various trees, plants, and groves are worshiped by Indians even today. The importance given to trees and, consequently, to the forest is obvious. The tree is a symbol of life that always regenerates itself and is immortal. The concept of "sacred forest" was significant in the Vedic period. A whole hymn is dedicated to the lady or goddess of the forest. "*Aranyani*" is "the mother of all forest beings who tills not but has stores of food."[9] The hymn also shows that flora and fauna were studied carefully to this day as the deity of sacred groves and goddess.

The Vedas warn us against the destruction of useful trees. The ancient people of India not only worshiped tree, they also realized the medical value of many trees and plants. They protected various trees and plants not because of their sacredness but also because they are necessary for the wellbeing. They protected them, worshiped them, and used them as cosmetics and medicine. Traditional medicine is made out of these trees and plants and the use of these medicines and cosmetics is something suitable for ecological system. Much of *Atharva Veda* is directly related to the use of many different plants, some of which still bear the same name and use.

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[7] Ṛgveda, 7.49.2.

[8] *Ṛgveda*, 10.137.67.

[9] *Ṛgveda*, 10.146.

5. Sacredness of Animal Life

The Vedas have meticulously described and recorded the wildlife that surrounded the human habitation and laid down rules that would guide the interaction between man and nature. According to the Vedas, animals are not inferior creatures, but manifestations of gods on the lower scale of evolution compared to man, each containing a spark of divine, capable of becoming human and achieving salvation like the rest of us. Spiritually, there is no distinction between human beings and other forms of life. All forms, including plants and animals, are manifestations of god as limited beings (*jivas*). Even microorganisms are *jivas*, having souls of their own.

Among the animals, the more awesome ones like tiger, elephant, and snake and the ones with which interaction was more, like monkey, got a more godlike status. The rest, however, did not go unnoticed, for almost every animal, big or small, was under the benevolence of a god. The tiger has been loved, feared, and worshiped in Vedas. It is seen as a brother, a protector, a fertility symbol, a destroyer of all evil, and the guardian of the jungles. Another animal that has an overwhelming presence in the Vedas is elephant. It has also secured a predominant status in the Vedic religion. The elephant god Gaṇeśa (who has a human body and the head of an elephant), the son of Śiva (the Destroyer), is worshiped as the powerful god who helps the devotees in the removal of obstacles. It is believed that the elephant-head of this god makes him one of the most intelligent gods and a great patron of knowledge. The '*nāga*' or the serpent (mostly the cobra) is one of the most popular figures that are frequently mentioned in the Vedas. The snake is seen as a guardian of the earth and all its secrets, including the biggest secret of all, the secret of creation. Creatures like fish, boar, and tortoise might sound irrelevant to many but, according to the Vedas, they are divine. Viṣṇu has been credited with as many as ten incarnations that he assumed to assist man in his struggle against evil. Of these ten incarnations, the first three were that of Matsya (the fish), Kūrma (the tortoise) and Varāha (the boar), respectively. Animals treated like gods are still alive through religion in India, giving enough reason to the believer to protect them.

The association of man with forest was an expansion of the field of studies of the immigrant Vedic people. Domestic animals are Vedic people's best friends, intimate partners in good and bad times, companions in joy and adversity. Domestic animals participated in family affairs and in festivals of the community during which they are decorated and exhibited with genuine pleasure. The sacredness of cow had an ecological imposition since in good times the cow was the giver of all, the female of the bull, the mother of the bullock, and she was the symbol of femininity and the generator of the new lives; the cow was the symbol of mother goddess, almost as much. The cow was the embodiment of all that is good in the female world and the giver of the basic needs for the life of the body, including warmth; indeed, mother cow is generous in life and after life. Even in times of adversity, the cow would not be sacrificed since she was the only hope for the future and for the production of new bounties. The greatest praise to *Aditī*, the mother of deities, unbounded, and unfettered mother of infinity is "*Aditī*, the cow, the sinless, injure it not."[10] The bull, on the other hand, was respected as the embodiment of strength and power.

One is often tempted to question the actual influence all these conservation lessons offered by the Vedas. The influence is there and very visible in case of certain village communities who share a special relation with certain birds or animals, especially with migratory birds. This remarkable co-existence of human beings with the wild animals encourages us to see wildlife as an aspect of natural habitat.

The new generation, however, is not very much influenced by traditional Vedic religion and philosophy; it has affected their attitude towards wildlife and conservation. Wildlife is not as safe in India as it used to be. We can only hope that traditional knowledge, if at all it is re-established with the scientific knowledge, will advocate conservation.

6. *Ṛta* and the Environment

People of the Vedic time saw clearly that there is a relation of cause and effect in everything, even if man and seers themselves could not perceive all the hidden meanings, purposes, and relationships among the multiplicity of natural phenomena that they observed. Nature, for them, was the manifestation or expression of the gods in different forms, not the gods themselves; they are manifestations the principle that governs the world and cosmic order, *Ṛta*. *Ṛta* is the social and moral order. It is conceived as correlate to natural order. The vast universe was not strewn about in random chaos, but had an inner order, a unity with an inexorable law and purpose that govern the working of both the macrocosm and microcosm.[11] This is the ordered course of the things. The processes of the earth's seasonal cycles are grounded in *Ṛta*. The principle of universal order holds the seasonal movements like a hub of a wheel. The earth is held by a regularity of cosmic order: the rising and setting of the sun, cycle of seasons, spring time and harvest. *Ṛta* is the intrinsic justice and order that sustain the eco-balance in nature.

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[10] *Ṛgveda*, 18.101,15.

The two functions of the earth, birth and death, are embodied in the fundamental ecological principle of interdependence. In every environment, the plant and animal species that constitute the biotic community together with soil, air, and water are innately organized so as to form a unified life support system. The Vedic seers see the universe as an inseparable web, whose interconnections are dynamic and not static. The cosmic web is alive; it moves and grows and changes continually. There exists an intricate and extensive network of links. If the single unit of this link is damaged, it would destroy and weaken the whole structure. There is no room for waste in nature. Whatever is used is recycled once again through seasonal flux. The fundamental intuition of the cyclic order of the seasons is celebrated by the seers:

Your circling seasons, night succeeding days,
Your summer, O Earth, your splashing rains,
Your winter and frosty season yielding too spring
May each and all produce for us milk![12]

Everything in the universe is deeply conceived to have its own worth and predation and is, therefore, morally significant. It is in accord with this moral understanding that each thing or, broadly, each species, consciously or unconsciously, individually or collectively, strives to realize the deeper truth in its own way.

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[11] R. N. Dandekar, *Insight into Hinduism*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1979, 15.
[12] *Atharva Veda*, 12.1.36.

The sense of interrelatedness, enjoined so fervently in the Vedas, provides a norm for the ethics of environment. The Vedic vision of geo-piety considers man to be a guardian of natural resources who has to replenish the bounties of the earth rather than plunder it. Conservation, thus, means a state of harmony (*ṛta*) with the land, forest, waters, and natural environment. Harmony is restored only when the bond between the human beings and nature is consistently strengthened, when human being and nature together are viewed as one biotic community. The earth, therefore, is worthy of adoration. The modern reductionist worldview, value system, and code of ethics are inadequate for a long term survival of our planet. Our last refuge is to revive a caring for the Mother Earth. It is said in the *Atharva Veda* that the earth was revealed to the humankind for joy.[13] In the light of this sensitive attitude, the seers had evolved a strategy to preserve the integrity of the biotic community.

In ecological terms, the Vedic hymns interweave a number of insights, from a primitive but unique conception of a world in which everything is a part, to a more complex idea of everything being a part of the unity that ultimately constitutes the unique whole that the universe is. Vedas speak of the uncanny unity of creation and, more significantly, the mysterious interconnectedness or interdependence of everything to everything else. In the universe, whether as a whole or as parts thereof, everything needs to be accorded with respect, and deep regard for its beinghood, its mysterious origins, its inner workings, its regulative order, and its future of the humankind and other species alike are inexorably connected. "Everything is sacred by virtue of its own nature because energy pervades everywhere, thus, the lofty tree is worshiped as well as the humble grass on which we sit and the one that helps to ignite fire: all and each one play their role in cosmic symphony"[14]

Vedic seers believed that every being is an embodied manifestation of the eternal self in time and space and in accordance with the karmic law. Ultimately, all the phenomenal and apparent differences will disappear. Differences are caught up in a web of illusion and ignorance from which a human being can escape only through the experiential and intuitive knowledge of his identity with the real Self. This sense of unity of life is also a powerful reason and stimulus to see in all beings one's own self, and view and respect all beings equally.

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[13] *Atharva Veda*, 12.1.60.

[14] Vannucci, *Ecological Readings in the Veda*, 113.

The "Gaia theory" developed by the scientist James Lovelock over the last twenty-five years is a scientific claim that the earth's "biota," acts as a single, self regulating living system in such a way as to maintain the conditions that are suitable for life. The theory proposes that living and nonliving parts of the earth together form a complex interacting system that can be thought of as a single organism. Also recent discoveries on the Wave Structure of Matter show that human beings do not exist in isolation, but are, in fact, structures of the Universe. Thus, they do not have dominion over the earth and all living things by divine decree; on the contrary, human beings are intimately interconnected to all other matter in the cosmos as well as to all other life on the earth.

7. Conclusion

From very early times, Indian thinkers employed the image of the loom to explain the interrelated web of life. The universe is imaged as a woven fabric, the warp and woof forming intricate interrelated patterns. The nature is treated with extreme reverence in India. No part of the nature is expected to be desecrated as they all participate in the animated play of *prakṛti*. The fundamental motive behind the ancient perception is the belief that nature is conscious, alive and animated.

History records that human attitude towards the environment has been two fold: either of exploitative dominance or pious reverence. The Vedic ethos considers human and nature as twin agents who reshape their environs for mutual benefits. The concern for the environmental conservation and protection is based on natural law of mutual dependence and reciprocity. The way we treat nature determines the way nature will treats us. The Vedic code states that we live in a participatory universe which threads together. Human active actions in nature constitute a causal chain. When there is genuine caring and sharing, they bring about beauty and bounty in the environs and maintain the eco-balance. When human beings look upon nature as an object of exploitation, as a commodity for trading, we do harm to the web or spring of life, in which everything must remain in its integrity. The integral bond between human and nature becomes a basis of the celebrations associated with the returning cycles of seasons. These celebrations, accompanied with prayer, incantations, consecration, and offerings to the Mother Earth reinforce innate links with the natural world.

What is it that holds the earth together? The unequivocal claim of the Vedas is that the eternal bond between man and nature is nourished by the law of universal harmony (*ṛta*), truth (*satya*), and prayers. The emerging vision of earth as one organism is only a recent image of an ancient heritage, finally traced to the Vedas. The ancient view of geo-piety and 'goddess ecology' contains a remarkable insight for the modern society.

To prevent further degradation of the environment and to enable more informed and participatory environmental management, we need a paradigm shift in our approach. We need to adopt a more holistic model of development, which includes environmental and social factors right from the beginning and is based on a robust ethical framework. To separate development, environment, and social justice, or to present these as conflicting issues, is incorrect. Unless this fundamental shift takes place, all our attempts to protect and conserve the environment are bound to fail in the long run.

Another important fact is to develop models based on local experience with the active participation of local communities that integrate science with traditional knowledge. The Vedic tradition can play a greater role in increasing environmental awareness through education and, to a lesser extent, the communication media. Through the medium of education we must stress the aspects of Vedic wisdom that accord a sense of sacredness to the nature. The modern generations should learn that there is divinity in the nature. They must realize in their higher consciousness that unless the natural environment is protected, the human environment will collapse. We should restate these ideals in a new form in the context of modern technologies and make them more meaningful with our contemporary mental framework. Moreover, we need to incorporate environmental values in our formal and non-formal educational systems. We need a coordinated and orchestrated programme of public awareness through every available medium to build up public opinion in renewing our age-old ideal of living in harmony with every element of the universe.

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JAINISM AND ECOLOGY

R. B. Patil◆

1. Introduction

"The Natural resources of the Earth, including the air, water, lands, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate."[1] To this effect, the report of World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission Report), in its "Our Common Future 1987," suggested twenty two legal principles for environmental protection and sustainable development. Some of these are addressed in a holistic manner by the religious tenets of Jainism. This essay is an attempt to unravel these dynamics.

2. 'Jainism' and Jainology

'Jainism' is the religion professed by the Jains, who follow the path practised and preached by the Jinas (conquerors of self). Jainism is an important, fully developed and well established religious and cultural system, which is purely indigenous to India. It is the oldest living representative of ancient *Sraman* current of Indian culture.[2] Jaina system of religion and culture is studied intensively and extensively. The literature, art and architecture, archaeological remains, tenants, practices, history and traditions of Jainism has become subjects of specialized studies. Thus, Jainology has become an important branch of Indology and Oriental Studies.[3]

3. Ecology and Informal Laws of Ecology

The term 'ecology' is derived from the Greek word *Oikas*, meaning 'a place to live'. Popularly, it is known as the study of relationship of an organism or group of organisms to their environment. According to Radhakamal Mukerjee, ecology being a comprehensive science of the

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[1] *The Stockholm Declaration of 1972*, Principle 2.

[2] Jyoti Prasad Jain, *Religion and Culture of the Jains*, New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1999, 1.

[3] Jain, *Religion and Culture of the Jains*, 8-9.

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balance of the human species opens out many approaches to the study of man's social orientation and behaviour.[4] The present day increasing tirade against environmental pollution and eco-imbalances proved a growing consciousness about ecology, economics, energy, employment and equity (they are known as 'Five Es'). Most important of these is ecology as it deals with basic life-supporting systems – land, water, flora, fauna, and the atmosphere.[5] There are the following Informal Laws of Ecology: 1) Everything is connected to everything else (i.e., interdependence and interrelatedness of the natural world). 2) Everything must go somewhere (by systems of production and manufacturing human beings merely transform the matter in terms of shape and form, e.g., solid, liquid, and gas for consumption, generating colossal wastes that are environmentally hazardous). 3) Nature knows the best (maintaining the organic link between human being and nature, by which the nature continues to regenerate the support life. 4) There is no such thing as free launch (resource intensive consumption and economic development experienced by human beings have an environmental/ecological cost).[6] All these indicate that if we disturb Nature in excess, it damages us irreparably.

So, we have to know how to behave with various components of Nature. The principles of Jainism, in this context, guide us as to how to behave with Nature which consists chiefly in moral behaviour towards Nature.

4. Jainism and Ecology

The relation of Jainism and ecology has been explained by Longkumer.[7] Jainism includes all living beings, including plants, contending that all living beings have souls and are of infinite value. For the Jains, this earth is the place of dreams, of actions, of moral and aesthetic culmination. They call it *Jivanmukta*, the divine on the earth. Jains purse the path of *Ahimsa* in their relation to each and every living being. *Ahimsa* means non-killing, non-violence, and harmlessness. It is based on the unity of all life, human, animal, plant, and even atoms of matter, whereby Jains forbid occupations to their followers that would involve taking life, not only hunting and butchery, but also agriculture, lest in digging the ground some animal or insect life be taken. Jain ecology is a process of focusing on nature through the practices of restraint, meditation, and action. This inner attentiveness, then, blossoms into an embrace of the life principle which is earth and all of its inter-relational beings. For the Jains, inherited or not, it is our responsibility as feeling and thinking beings to make loving the preferred medium of exchange on the earth. The heart of Jainism is, thus, of stewardship, requiring human diligence, human conscience, and human love. Jain ecology is nothing more than universal love. The attempt has been made in the essay to present views on ecology expressed in Jainism.

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[4] Radhakamal Mukerjee, *Man and His Habitation*, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1968, ix.

[5] S. C. Shastri, *Environmental Law*, Lucknow: Eastern Book Company, 2002, 3.

[6] Binay Kumar Patnaik, "Ecological Bases of Indian Traditions: Search for an Indigenous Vision," *The Eastern Anthropologist* 58, 3-4 (July-December 2005), 420.

[7] Imti Samuel Longkumer, "Ecological Sensitivity in Indian Religions," *Theology of Our Times* 6 (August 1999).

5. Jaina Religion, Bhagwan Mahavir, and Environment

There are many independent living organisms in *Pruthvi*, *Aap*, *Teja*, *Vayu*, and *Vanaspati* and these are leading their life accordingly. This was taught by Bhagwan Mahavir. The attempt was made to curb pollution at the individual, family, and societal levels. The rules of conduct for the Jain laymen and *munis* are not only for individual way of life; instead it tries to control the external environment as well.

Today every country is suspicious that other countries will attack for oil, wealth, forests, water, etc. This suspicious and frightening atmosphere leads to conflicts and even to wars. The global climate is changing. The effects of pollution are seen not only on human beings but also on the *Panchmahabhutas*.

The environmental pollution is due to the disrupted relationship between nature and human beings. The natural pollution is compensated by its own ways. However, when human beings pollute, resulting from *krodh*, *man*, *maya*, and *lobh*, it is not being naturally compensated, hence, the resulting environmental problems.[8]

6. Jaina Ethics: Rules of Conduct

The rules of conduct have been classified and explained by V. A. Sangave.[9] These are the following: Two categories: 1) householders 2) ascetics. The ethical code for householders is divided into the observance of 12 *vratas* or vows, 11 *pratimas* or stage in householder's life, 6 *avasykas* or daily duties and general principles of appropriate conduct.

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[8] Arhadas Dige, "Jaina Religion and Environmental View," *Pragati ani Jinavijay* (Marathi Weekly), January 1, 1999.

[9] Vilas A. Sangave, *Aspects of Jain Religion*, New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1999, 66-78.

The twelve *vratas* or vows are divided into the following three categories: 1) Five *anuvratas* or small vows: i) *ahimsa*, ii) *Satya*, iii) *asteya*, iv) *brahmacharya*, and v) *aparigraha*. 2) Three *gunavrata* or multiplicative vows: i) *digvrata* (limit one's worldly activity to fixed points), ii) *desavrata*, and iii) *anarthadanda vrata* (not to commit purposeless sinful actions). 3) Four *Sikshavrata* (disciplinary vows): i) *Samayika*, ii) *prosadhopavasa* (fast on four days in a month), iii) *Upabhog-paribhog-parimana* (limiting one's enjoyment of consumable and non-consumable things), and iv) *Atithi-samvibhaga* (taking food only after feeding ascetics).

The eleven *Pratimas* or stages are thee following: 1) *Darsana* (sound knowledge of doctrine and their application in life), 2) *Vrata* (observing the 12 *vratas*), 3) *Samayika* (self-contemplation and purification), 4) *Prosadhopavasa*, 5) *Sachitta-tyaga* (not trample upon any growing plant or pluck fruits from a tree) 6) *Ratri-bhojana tyag*, 7) *Brahmacharya*, 8) *Arambha-tyaga* (refrain from all activities), 9) *Parigraha-tyag* (abandonment of all kinds of attachment) 10) *Anumati-tyag* (increase vigour for asceticism), and 11) *Uddista-tyag* (abandoning family life).

The six *Avasyakas* are the following: 1) worship of God, 2) worship of preceptor, 3) study of scriptures, 4) self-control, 5) austerities, and 6) giving gifts. There are also *thirty-five* General Principles of appropriate conduct as guidance for putting them into actual practice by the householders during their entire career.

7. The Jain Declaration on Nature

It was presented to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh (Prince Philip), Buckingham Palace, London, on 23rd October, 1990, by a Jain Delegation of International Community. Sangave, one of the members of delegation, has explained this declaration in detail.[10] It was the first occasion to present such a Declaration in the name of the traditional and distinctive religion of Jainism to an international organisation World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature founded by His Royal Highness Prince Philip. WWF strives for conservation of nature and protection of wildlife. It was felt to secure involvement of the important religions concerned actively with the objective of preservation of nature and maintenance of ecological balance. Apart from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Bahai, and Sikh, the Jain religion became the eighth in this International Network on Conservation and Religion. In this connection, it was decided to undertake the translation work of the text *Tattvartha-Sutra* by Acarya Umasvati.

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[10] V. A. Sangave, "The Jain Declaration on Nature: A Historic Document in Development in India," *Alternative Paradigms: Essays in Honour of Prof. S. N. Pawar*, eds., Patil R. B., Salunkhe S. A., Jadhav R. B., Subhedar I. S., and S. N. Kolhapur: Pawar Felicitation Committee, 2004, 203-209.

The Jain Declaration on Nature begins by highlighting the gist of Jainism, *Parasparopargraho Jivanam* (meaning, "all Life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence"). It is a *sutra*, an aphorism, from *Tattvartha-Sutra*. This has been made very popular by Acharya Vidyanand Maharaj. It stresses the philosophy of ecological harmony and non-violence on which the doctrines and ethics of Jainism are based. The Declaration on Nature is divided into three parts: Jain teachings, Jain cosmology, and Jain code of conduct.

7.1. Jain Teachings

1) The most prominent place has been given to the principle of *Ahimsa*. It is directed to human beings and nature so that everyone avoids any chance of violence in heart and mind of human beings; it is believed that without violent thoughts, there can be no violent actions. 2) The *sutra*, *Parasparopagraho Jivanam*, i.e., all life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence, is accepted as a central teaching. It defines the scope of modern ecology as it stresses the fundamental principle that all aspects of nature belong together and are bound in physical and metaphysical relationship. 3) The doctrine of manifold aspects (*Anekantvada*) emphasizes the concept of universal independence and recommends that one should take into account the viewpoints of other species, communities, nations, and human beings. 4) *Samyaktva* (equanimity towards *Jiva* and *Ajiva*). 5) Compassion towards all human beings (*Jivadaya*) leads to actions which have great relevance to contemporary environmental concerns.

7.2. Jain Cosmology

The universe consists of *Jiva* and *Ajiva* things, the two everlasting, uncreated, independent, and coexisting categories. Human beings have a great moral responsibility in their mutual dealings with rest of the universe. The human beings have a moral responsibility which has made

Jain tradition a cradle for the creed of environmental protection and harmony.

7.3. Jain Code of Conduct

The code of conduct for the Jain householder consists in the following: 1) the five *vratas*, 2) kindness to animals, 3) vegetarianism, 4) self-restraint and the avoidance of waste, and 5) charity. The code is profoundly ecological in its practical consequences and it aims to achieve a holistic environmental protection, peace and harmony in the universe. The observance of principle of *ahimsa* will go a long way in solving the present-day problems of pollution, degradation, deterioration, and destruction of nature.

8. Environmental Awareness in Jainism

Environmental awareness is a non-violent approach to life which reflects a concern for living and non-living. Jainisim teaches that you should not do to others what you would not have done to yourself. So, if you don't want to be harmed, you should refrain from harming others, geographically, economically, socially, or spiritually.

In Jainism, there is no scope for a human being to seek salvation by getting dissociated from the environment. The 'natural-human-economic' resources, if exploited for the satisfaction of selfish comforts and self-centred pleasures, it is certain to result in Karma, which is nothing other than suffering. Jainism inducts its members to a life of environmental awareness early in life. This has been discussed by Ramanujam Geetha by explaining the following concepts, either in the form of virtues or vices.[11]

Anuvratas: It refers to the spiritual mission of environment of common man, as a solution to the ecological crises contributed by the individual. What we interpret as do's and don'ts of environmental management philosophy are the quintessence of *anuvrata*. *Ahimsa* is very comprehensive and takes into consideration the welfare of all beings on the earth ("*Ahimsa paramo Dharma*"). We must live in harmony with nature. We will have to be non-violent towards human beings, trees, birds, and animals. Jainisim is a way of life with non-violence and co-existence as its mission. If *ahimsanuvrata* is taken by every householder at an individual level, environmental crisis will be resolved by itself.

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[11] Geetha Ramanujam, *Environmental Awareness in Jainism*, Chennai: Dept. of Jainism, University of Madras, 2006, 3-113.

Chedana pertains to deforestation, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, etc. It involves in torturing the plants, animals and the five elements of the pleasure and comfort of man. Chopping of any of the parts of a living entity – including cruel attack on flora, fauna, and matter – by sharp or destructive instruments out of anger, for sport or with no purpose, is a destructive approach that finally results in endangering the nature.

Bandhan refers to keeping anything under captivity without any consideration for its freedom to exist or live. Rearing animals without adequate shelter, air, light, space, and food is considered to be *aticara*.

Aharavarna includes problems related to food distribution and deliberate deprivation of basic rights of another being. Causing starvation of another being through negligence, indifference, deliberation, or bad governance forms part of *aharavarna*. If you buy a plant, but fail to nurture it by watering it, it is an *aticara*. Neglecting to nurture animals or fellow beings when you know they are hungry is also a sin.

Acaurya or non-stealing is a precept for all Jains. "Only when a person falls prey to greed, he is tempted to steal others property." Greed is the root cause of all corruption and exploitation of natural resources.

Aparigrah, that is, desire for possession is a vice, for a discontented human being can never radiate peace and happiness to his fellow beings and the environment. As M. K. Gandhi said, the wealth of the world can meet the need of every single man and not a single man's greed. Mahavir and Gandhi stood by *Anuvratas*, not only preaching about them, but also following them in their own lives. We see the enormous devastation caused to environment by human quest for *parigrah* of natural resources. In fact, we have overexploited the renewable and non-renewable resources to satisfy the greed, and not the need. Jainism provides a sustainable solution to ecological crisis as it is a practical, positive and rational way of life. It teaches how a man can live in coexistence with his surroundings.

Jain environmental awareness involves balancing human needs and protecting natural and cultural heritage for the future generations through the process of self-restraint. The principle *paraspropgrahojivanam* calls for 'living with others, and living for others'.

By avoiding *Chedana* or inflicting deliberate *himsa* in a small way on flora, fauna or matter, we can reduce deforestation and soil erosion to a great extent. This, in turn, will stop the extinction of many animals, birds, etc., that require forest cover for shelter and food. By avoiding *atibharropana*, which in this case involves putting excess pressure on ecosystem and ecology, we can definitely reduce destruction and degradation of resources.

Mahavir lived a harsh and austere life in the forests for twelve and half years. He studied nature closely and analysed man in relation to nature. He comprehended true ecology and ecosophy; he practically lived in coexistence with nature before he advocated *Anuvratas* and *Mahavratas*. What he preached to his disciples was what he lived and experienced. The whole message of Mahavir in relation to the preset eco-crisis can be summed up as follows: human being is responsible for the environment. If we face crises today, we are responsible. Human beings alone can solve it through each one's self-imposition of *Anuvratas*, and by avoiding the *aticaras*.

As regards social ecology, Jainism teaches a self-imposed discipline, with due regard to one's own capacities and surroundings. Jainism does not inculcate fatalism of the idle do-nothing-fellow as far as the environment is concerned. It characterizes labour as a process in which human being starts, regulates, and controls the material reaction with the nature.

9. Conclusion

Jaina ecological consciousness is grounded in a judicial blend of divine holism and vision of non-exploitative science and technology. Religion and science must go hand in hand and chart a single path to guide human spirituality in the direction of our planet and conservation of its resources. The scientific approach, reasoning, and practices prescribed by Jainism are highly relevant today when environmental concerns are on the top of human agenda.

Attempts are being made in the Jain religion to curb pollution at the individual, family and society levels. Jain code of conduct controls individual way of life and also external environment. In the present era, the conferences/summits are being held at the national and international levels on this issue. Importance is given to the concepts of conservation of natural resources, control of pollution, and sustainable development with which we would equip ourselves to conserve the nature for the future generations.

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SACRED NATURE

A Hindu Approach to Environment

Sanjyot D. Pai Vernekar◆

1. Introduction

The attitudes and values that shape people's concept of nature come basically from the religious views and ethical practices. Religions have not only determined the way we perceive the world but also set roles that individuals play in nature. Every religious tradition, while upholding the supremacy of human being, has condemned the needless exploitation of living as well as non-living beings. There has to be a comprehensive re-evaluation of the human-earth relationship for human beings to continue as a viable species on this increasingly degraded planet.

The Vedas, the *Bhagvad Gītā*, the Gandhian ideals, and contemporary issues all show how Hinduism views the environment and how it deals with the ecological problems. The Hindu perspective on the environment is pertinent because the ancient seers gave due importance to the environmental issues as well as anticipated some of the problems we are facing today. Hinduism has emphasized human dependence on nature and the planet. Hindu religious doctrines provide us with certain normative criteria regarding our attitude towards nature.

2. Vedic Tradition and Environment

The Vedas, the basic text of Hinduism, have valued nature and its intrinsic capacity. They express concern for nature by providing a metaphysical union between the human and the non-human beings, thereby establishing a strong relationship between nature and us. The Indic environmental ethos, according to L. M. Singhvi, declares: "all aspects and phenomena of nature belong together and are bound in a physical as well as metaphysical relationship, and views life as a gift of togetherness and of mutual accommodation and assistance in a universe teeming with interdependent constituents."[1] Vedas explain the unity of creation by pointing out that everything is interconnected to everything else. In the web of being,

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[1] L. M. Singhvi, "The East Is Green" http://www.unep.org/ourplanet/imgversn/82/singhvi.html.

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everything has an interest and a purpose to fulfil. Thus, everything is worthy of a moral consideration. The Vedic texts emphasize that we all owe a responsibility to the environment not only for ourselves but also for the sake of those around us. According to L. M. Singhvi, "the soul of the Vedic tradition is peace and harmony, *dharma* and *ṛta*, restraint and responsibility, based on *ahiṁsā* (non-violence) and *karuṇā* (compassion). These ideas and precepts are the elements of the Vedic heritage which have the capacity and potential to catalyse and enliven a deeper feeling of reverence for Life and Nature."[2]

The Vedic seers acknowledge that the material causes of this creation happen to be the *Pañca Mahābhūtās* (Five Great Elements). They are earth or *Pṛthvī*, air or *Vāyu*, space or *Ākāśa*, water or *Āpaḥ* and light/fire or *Agni*. These five elements are cosmic elements which create, nurture, and sustain all forms of life; after death or decay, they absorb what was created earlier. Thus, these elements play a significant role as far as the preservation and sustenance of the environment is concerned. These *Mahābhūtās* are deified in the Vedic as well as *Purāṇic* literature. These elements are omnipresent and all pervasive, together they constitute *Brahman*.

Pṛthvī is considered as a divinity in the *Ṛgveda*. She is a mother and upholder of all. *Pṛthvī* is also identified with the Goddess *Aditi*, a mother and protector of the holy cosmic law. The relationship between earth and humans is depicted in *Pṛthvī Sūkta* of *Atharva Veda*. The earth is seen as the provider of space for the entire family. The Vedic seers regard the earth as a "sacred space" for the consecrated endeavours and aspirations of humankind and for the practice of restraint and responsibility.

In the Vedas, *Vāyu* (air) is viewed as the bond and the thread which keeps the universe together. *Vāyu* is also linked to *Prāṇa* (the life-sustaining breath). Nothing can survive in the absence of *Prāṇa*. *Ākāśa* (space) is not a material or physical element. It is from *Akāśa* that all beings (their souls) come and it is where they return after their death. *Ākāśa* is the final refuge of all beings. *Āpaḥ* (water) is the reservoir of all curative medicines and nectar. Water is the mother of all beings and the foundation (*pratiṣthā*) of all in the universe. *Agni* (light/fire) creates life on earth. In the later Vedic description, *Agni* is known as the sun and light. In the form of the sun, *Agni* is regarded as the soul and also as the ruler and preserver of the world. John M. Koller writes: "The *Brāhmaṇa* and

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[2] L. M. Singhvi, "The Summit on Religions and Conservations," Atami, Japan, 7 April, 1995.

Āraṇyaka texts of the earlier Vedic period clearly view human existence as an integral part of nature, classifying human beings as domesticated animals."[3] They, however, are special insofar as they engage in abstract reflective thought and intentional action. All living beings are sacred because they are parts of God and should be treated with respect and compassion.

3. Hinduism and Nature Worship

Hinduism also lays emphasis on nature worship. For example, Hindus have long revered the tree. The tree is viewed as a powerful symbol of abundance. Rivers also are an integral part of Hindu religious practice. There are various Vedic hymns in the praise of Sarasvatī (a river now dry). The river Gaṅgā, which flows through the northern parts of India, is referred to as a goddess originating from the head of *Śiva*, who the Lord of the Himalaya Mountains, giving sustenance to million of Indians. Thus, rivers play a very important role in Hindu rituals.

The *Upaniṣads* narrate that after creating the universe, the creator entered into each and every object in order to help maintain an interrelationship. One of the animals worshipped by the Hindus is cow. The principle of cow protection symbolizes human responsibility to the sub-human world. It also strengthens the reverence for all forms of life. Hinduism stresses the sanctity of life. Only God has sovereignty over all creatures. Thus, human beings have no dominion over their own lives as well as non-human life. Consequently, "humanity cannot act as a viceroy of God to oversee the planet nor assign degrees of relative worth to other species."[4] The divine being is the one underlying power of unity. There is no form of life that is inferior. All lives play their fixed roles. In this context, M. Vannuci writes as follows: "everything is sacred by virtue of its own nature because energy pervades everything; thus, the lofty tree is worshipped as well as the humble grass on which we sit and the one that helps ignite the fire: all and each one play their role in the cosmic symphony."[5]

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[3] John M. Koller, "Humankind and Nature in Indian Philosophy" in E. Deutsch and R. Bontekoe, *A Companion to World Philosophies*, New York: Blackwell, 1997, 280.

[4] O. P. Dwivedi, "Classical India" in Dale Jamieson, ed., *A Companion To Environmental Philosophy*, New York: Blackwell, 2001, 44.

[5] M. Vannucci, *Ecological Readings in the Veda: Matter-Energy-Life*, New Delhi: DK Printworld, 1994, 113.

4. Intimate Relationship of Humans Beings and Other Living Beings

All kinds of life – plants, insects, birds, and animals – contribute towards the maintenance of the ecological balance. However, we human beings are nullifying the benefits of the contributions made by other species of life. The ecological balance is disturbed by human greed for material enjoyment and craze for power. The other forms of life, namely, plants, animals, birds, etc., are thoughtlessly killed. The plants and forests are destroyed indiscriminately to fulfil human selfishness.

Every entity and organism is a part of one large extended family. This view is based on the fundamental concept of *Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam*.[6] The environment is our home and all its members belong to one family. Purushottama Billimoria writes: "The Vedas speak of the uncanny unity of creation and, more significantly, the mysterious interconnectedness or co-dependence of everything to everything else."[7]

Unlike the Semitic religions, Hindu eschatology highlights the intimate relationship of human beings with other living beings like animals, birds, insects, plants, etc., which is evident in the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation. Hinduism maintains that there is a soul in all living beings. The soul (of any living being, including animals, humans, and plants) reincarnates, depending on one's karma. Karma (literally, action) is the sum of one's actions and the force that determines one's next reincarnation. The cycle of death and rebirth governed by karma is referred to as *saṁsāra*. Hinduism holds that soul goes on repeatedly being born and dead. One is reborn on account of desire, namely, the desire to be born because he or she wants to enjoy worldly pleasures. This is possible only through a body. However, when all desires vanish, the person will not be reborn anymore. When the cycle of birth and rebirth comes to an end, the person is said to have attained *mokṣa* or liberation. The karma determines the form of life that one would assume while taking rebirth, for example, whether one will be reborn as a human being, a plant, an animal, etc. Karma also determines the length of life (*āyu*) and the experiences that must accompany it (*bhoga*).

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[6] "*Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam*" is a part of the apophthegm (*subhāsita*): "*Ayam Vasudhaiva nijah paroveti gaṇanā laghucetasām / Udāracaritānām tu* narrow- *Kuṭumbakam*" ("To consider someone as mine and someone as other is one mindedness. The broad-minded would consider the whole *Vasudhā* [earth] as the family.") This apophthegm establishes the fact that our ancient sages visualized can necessity of the unity of organic/inorganic life as a whole. This unity alone See, ensure the survival as well as the welfare of the humanity. *Samskrtabhạsābodhinī-Prathamā* (Kannada version), Śrngagirīh: Srī Surasaraswatī Sabhā, 1983, 12.

[7] Billimoria, "Environmental Ethics of Indian Religious Traditions," 4.

5. Central Concepts of Ethics and Environment

The concept of dharma is pertinent in environmental discussions. K. K. Klostermaier points out that "Dharma presupposes a social order in which all functions and duties are assigned to separate classes, whose smooth interaction guarantees the wellbeing of society as a whole and, beyond this, maintains the harmony of the whole universe."[8] The Sanskrit root '*dhṛ*' means to sustain, uphold and support. Human beings have a responsibility, indeed a duty, to help sustain this world.

Ahiṁsā is another central concept of Hindu ethics. It is viewed as a principle of 'non-injury'. *Ahiṁsā* was used by many modern thinkers as a tool to solve several ethical issues. *Ahiṁsā* is very significant in Jainism as well. In Jainism, hurting any being would result in the thickening of one's karma which would hinder the path to liberation. As pointed out by C. K. Chapple, the worldview of Jainas may be termed as 'bio-cosmology'. The Jaina vows of *Ahiṁsā* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *aṣṭeya* (non-stealing), *brahmacarya* (sexual restraint) and *aparigraha* (non-possession) can be reinterpreted in an ecological sense as fostering an attitude of respect for all life forms.[9]

Hinduism maintains that God's creation is sacred. Human beings do not have the right to destroy what they cannot create. One is forbidden from taking the life and/or causing injury to any sentient being (except in the context of Vedic sacrifice where it is prescribed and sanctioned). In the Assisi Declaration, issued by a gathering of world religious leaders, in 1986, the Hindu statement reads as follows: "the human race, though at the top of the evolutionary pyramid at present, is not seen as something apart from earth and its many forms. People did not spring fully formed to dominate lesser life, but evolved out of these forms and are integrally linked with them."[10] Nature being sacred and the divine expressed through all its forms, it is essential to have reverence for life and practice *Ahiṁsā*.

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[8] K. K. Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, Albany: State University of New York, 1989, 48-49.

[9] C. K. Chapple, "Hinduism, Jainism and Ecology," *Earth Ethics* 10, 1 (1998), 19.

[10] "Issues in Contemporary Faith: Religion and Ethics" http://www.bbc.co.uk/gcsebitesize.

6. Vedānta Tradition and Environment

The Advaita Vedānta philosophy does play a significant role as far as our relation with the environment is considered. The Advaita Vedānta speaks of the world as *māyā*, that is, the reality of the world and all things and relations within them is taken to be as illusory. The only reality is *Brahman*. L. E. Nelson argues that if the world is considered as *māyā*, then, there is no motive for maintaining or respecting it.[11] On the other hand, E. Deutsche holds that Vedānta philosophy implies that all life is one, that, in essence, everything is reality and as such would merit moral consideration. Vedānta enables us to institute a proper ecological ethics.[12] Vedānta offers the notion of "continuity of man and all physical nature." In order to realize a proper relation with nature, we have to feel a deep kinship with nature and all life forms. This would result in a reverence for all living beings. The other concept in the Vedānta philosophy is "the doctrine of creation." There is a natural unfolding of spirit in the world and, accordingly, it sees everything in nature as of intrinsic spiritual worth. The fundamental unity of everything as well as of spiritual kinship with everything rules out the possibility of gross exploitation of nature in any form.

Rāmānuja, the one who propounded Viśiṣtadvaita, views the world as a part of God and totally dependent on him, and considers it a mistake to identify the self with the body and the natural processes. Inequality belongs to *Prakṛti*. The living beings do not share one self but the selves of beings are similar. Madhva, another philosopher who subscribed to dvaita theory, believed in a personal God (*parameśvara*). God controls everything. What is significant of these thinkers is that they accord the real identity of the self and its relationships as conducive to a genuine environmental ethics.

7. Views of Contemporary Thinkers on Environment

The contemporary thinkers, like Mahatma Gandhi and Radhakrishnan, have held that Hinduism supports deep ecology to a great extent. Gandhi's theory of non-violence has a great influence on social and political life. Gandhi stressed the need for an ethic of non-injury in our treatment of animals as well as in our behaviour towards other human beings. He realized that the principle of non-violence can bring about renunciation of the feeling of enmity. He defines *Ahiṁsā* in a positive manner as 'love'. This love or non-violence is to be practised by the individual not only for his/her individual peace and liberation but to be followed as a rule of conduct for the whole society if it is to live consistently in human dignity. Gandhi made non-violence an obligatory principle for all. He turned *Ahiṁsā* into a dynamic force, informed by truth (*satya*). The Chipko environment movement, which describes an unrelenting embracing of trees to prevent environmental destruction by human intervention, is greatly influenced by Gandhian environmental awareness programmes and is led by Gandhian Sarvodayā workers on the principle of non-violent resistance. In this context, Arne Naess writes: "Gandhi recognized a basic common right to live and blossom to self-realization applicable to any being having interests or needs. Gandhi made manifest the internal relation between self-realization, non-violence and what is sometimes called bio-spherical egalitarianism."[13]

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[11] Lance E. Nelson, "Reverence for Nature or the Irrelevance of Nature? Advaita Vedanta and Ecological Concern," *Journal of Dharma* 16, 3 (July-September 1991), 285.

[12] Eliot Deutsch, "Vedanta and Ecology," *Indian Philosophical Annual* 6 (1970), 79-88.

According to Radhakrishnan, "though in the process of attaining the vision of self we had to retreat from outward things and separate the self from the world, when the vision is attained the world is drawn into the self. On the ethical plane, this means that there should grow a detachment from the world and when it is attained, a return to it through love, suffering and sacrifice for it. The sense of a separate finite self with its hopes and fears, its likes and dislikes is destroyed."[14] From the above view of Radhakrishnan, we conclude that, according to the philosophies of oneness, the path, though it goes first inwards, leads out again to everything. The *Karmamārga* enables the *Karmoyogi* to be in touch with all creatures. This path enables us to see the greater self everywhere, in living and non-living beings as well as in nature as a whole.

8. Conclusion

In the west, the attitude towards nature was greatly influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to Lynn White, Christianity separated humans from nature, thereby creating a dualism. This, in turn, encourages exploitation and domination of nature for the benefit of human beings. However, unlike in the western tradition, the concept of environmental protection existed in Hinduism right from the time of the Vedas. Hinduism perceived God's presence in every aspect of nature. The natural forces were all manifestations of Brahman. Thus, Hindus felt it necessary to live in harmony with the creation, including the earth, rivers, forests, air, trees, etc. Various aspects of nature, like trees and rivers, are revered and worshipped by the Hindus and are considered as sacred.

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[13] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 26.

[14] S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, Bombay: George Allen & Unwin (India) Pvt. Ltd., 1971, 204.

In the process of modernization and commercialisation, Hindus have forgotten these traditional views about the environment; instead, they too have acquired an exploitative attitude towards nature. Our forests are destroyed and rivers are polluted, resulting in total environmental degradation. The religious values that acted as sanctions against environmental destruction are almost sidelined.

The traditional values that encouraged respect and regard for nature and all the living and non-living beings enabled them to consider everything to be God's creation. That is why David Frawley laments:

> Unfortunately, Hindus have forgotten this Vedic view of the earth and don't protect their natural environment. They have not added a (traditional) Hindu point of view to the ecology movement which is perhaps the main idealistic movement in the world today... Part of the challenge of modern Hinduism is to reclaim its connection to the earth.[15]

The environmental crises that we face today are not merely crises of science and technology but crises of human values; more importantly, they are crises of the human spirit. Hinduism offers a set of values and norms regarding our relationship with nature. The Hindu culture of eco-spirituality can enable us to control greed, exploitation, abuse, mistreatment, and defilement of nature. The western concept of environmental stewardship can be a mechanism to strengthen the respect for nature and provide new ways of valuing and caring. Drawing upon the Vedic and *Purāṇic* readings, environmental stewardship can become a new universal consciousness which may usher in new values, thereby enabling the creation of an environmentally caring world.

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[15] David Frawley, *How I Became a Hindu: My Discovery of Vedic Dharma*, *Voice of India*, 2000.

Journal of Dharma 33, 2 (April-June 2008), 213-220

BOOK REVIEWS

Jose Varickasseril and Mathew Kariappuram, eds., *Be My Witnesses: Essays in Honour of Dr. Sebastian Karotemprel SDB*, Shillong: Vendrame Institute of Publications, 2001, pages 300, ISBN: 81-85408-00-29.

The book *Be My Witnesses*, edited by Jose Varickasseril and Mathew Kariappuram, is a genuine contribution to the scanty literature available in the inter-disciplinary research in missiology and sociology. The book comprises of twenty four articles written by erudite scholars who are veterans in theology, sociology, and missionary work. Each article touches on the theme, giving due references to the biblical contexts. The articles of this book cover burning issues regarding theology, missiology, sociology, and contextualization.

"Trinity and Human Dignity," by Angelo Amato, is a good example for an article in theology. Joseph Mappilaparambil's "A Paradigm Shift in Church's Outlook on Mission" comes under missiology. For sociology, we find an outstanding article in "When Upward Mobility Combines with Apathy," by Thomas Menamparambil, which deals with the hierarchical changes happening in the present social scenario. "Contextualizing Theological Education and Mission outside the United States," by Jonathan Bonk, is an article under the theme 'contextualization'. Similarly, all other articles can be placed in one of the four disciplines mentioned above.

Even though we can classify the articles under four categories as missiolgy, etc., all of them are inter-related. There is, of course, an undercurrent connecting all of them. As we know, there are agonies and ecstasies in all walks of life. It will be there in religious as well as secular life. The only thing we can do with them is to analyze them and look for solutions, leaving the final resolution to God's will. A missionary work will not bring any significant result without God's involvement. When missiology proposes new perspectives, they would be enough to deal with the problems in the society. Theologizing and contextualizing would help us to do more systematic analysis. So, all articles in this volume are life-oriented and they do not present ivory tower or arm-chair discussions. The entire discussion contributes something to make Christian lives better.

Obviously, the articles in this collection are of disparate nature; some tend to be explanatory, some investigative, some reflective, and others are

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contextual; yet, there are others making an attempt to trailblazing. All authors have a deep sense of loyalty and commitment to the Word of God and to the Christian mission.

Professor Dr. Sebastian Karotemprel is a multifaceted personality, whose wide-ranging interests and involvements spread over biblical, ecumenical, international, and interdisciplinary realms. The title of the book, *Be My Witnesses*, is a maxim formed from Jesus' call to witness to the Gospel. A prayer composed by Karotemprel, given in the foreword, reveals his deep-rooted Christian faith and fullly accomplished spiritual life. Different articles together give out an invitation to become His witnesses wherever we live. It resembles the life of Sebastian Karotemprel, who performed various tasks with the zeal of a missionary.

The world today is in search of a message that can never fail and binds us inwardly. That is where biblical traditions offer sure guidance and a rocklike assurance to a world of uncertainty. Holy Spirit is the guiding agent in all missionary undertakings; if we are not provided with the grace of God, as the authors establish, various mission methods and approaches would fail, especially when we encounter the harsh realities of the world. This is the essence of all the discussions presented in the book, which I hope would enlighten the present future Christian missionaries in their mandate of spreading the Gospel message.

Gregory Arattukulangara

Ronald Roberson, ***The Eastern Christian Churches: A Brief Survey***, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004, pages 316.

In the East, many Christian churches have emerged according to their cultural, political, social, and economic background. This book is basically a survey of the Eastern Churches and the causes for the emergence of the churches. It has four parts in which the author classifies the churches according to the nature of their communion. Those who are interested in ecumenical movements can locate a lot of information about the churches in this volume.

In the first part of the book, the author discusses the Assyrian Church of the East. This church is considered to be multi-ethnic, as the Assyrian people played a central role in the ecclesial life which is developed depending upon the cultures of the country. This church, however, is not in communion with any other church in the East. The second part deals with the Oriental Orthodox Churches which are in full communion with each other. These churches, however, are independent and are based on their cultures. These churches rejected the Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon. There are six main Oriental Orthodox Churches. The third part discusses about the Orthodox Churches, which are in communion with the national or regional churches; they consider the Patriarch of Constantinople as the leader and symbol of their unity. The author divides the Orthodox Churches into autocephalous, autonomous, canonical churches under Constantinople, and churches of irregular status. The Patriarch of Constantinople is hailed as the Ecumenical Patriarch, as he is the unifying factor among them. In the fourth part, the author gives information about the Catholic Eastern Churches, which are in full communion with Rome. There are many orthodox churches which have converted into the communion with Rome after a lot of discussion between them and Roman Catholic Church. Even if these churches are in full communion with Rome, they are independent and they have their own geographical existence.

One of the main features of this book is the long appendix. There are two appendices in which two of author's articles which explain the causes for the rift between the Catholic Church and other churches. The author gives a clear evaluation of the historical background of the problems, the dialogue between the churches for a better relationship, and the visits of popes and the oriental orthodox hierarchies.

Another feature of this book is the fact that the author has collected data of the churches from their official websites. This book enlists information pertaining to the location, head, title of the church, residence of the head, membership, and the official website. It gives a brief history and the geographical areas where a particular church is predominantly present. This may satisfy a reader who is in search of the history of churches. The membership details of these churches may not be accurate as many people who are living outside the geographical area of the church may not be included.

We see that the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church have been in discussion over their theological differences; the author gives scientific description about the reasons that there does not emerge any immediate agreement. Although this book has a long bibliography, which is mostly pertaining to the appendices, the main discussion of the book chiefly relies on the websites, which I consider to be a drawback in the arena of scientific research. The author, however, has undertaken enormous hard work in completing this survey, which makes it a valuable asset in understanding various churches.

Joby Joseph

Swami Vikrant, *Classical Indian Philosophy*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publication, 2007, pages v + 124.

The book, *Classical Indian Philosophy*, is an epigrammatic but enriching book of Swami Vikrant. This book has two parts, namely "*Astika Darsans*" (the orthodox systems) and "*Nastika Darsans*" (the heterodox system). The first part deals with the *Nyaya*, *Vaiseshika*, *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimamsa*, and *Vedantas*. There is an elaborate study of Vedanta, mainly basing on the *advaita*, *visishtadvaita*, *dvaita*, and *suddhadvaita*. The second part deals with Jainism, Buddhism, and the Charvakas. This book could be very useful to the beginners of philosophical studies, as it provides a comprehensive approach and deep knowledge about Indian and Western philosophical approaches.

The first part starts with *Nyaya* (from the root '*ni*'), which means reasoning, to lead, or method. Here we come across the goal of *Nyaya* which is identified as *moksh* or liberation. Also we see the *Nyaya* methodology, literature, philosophy, and psychology, liberation and theology being dealt with. Another attracting feature of this book is the continued comparison of Indian philosophy with western philosophy. For example, the author opines: "*Nyaya* is some time called *tarka vidya* (science of debate)… Both Socrates and Plato have much importance to the method of dialogue in philosophising." In the section on *Vaiseshika* (different) system, founded by Kanabhaksha, the author deals with the seven categories (*padarthas*). They are quality, action, generality, particularity, inherence, and non-existence. *Sankhya* system deals with the *Sankhya Sutra*. According to the *Sankhya*, liberation from the *samsara* is the goal of every activity. *Sankhya* is a school of dual realism. Here we have also the descriptive study of two categories, namely *prakriti* and *purusha* (matter and spirit).

Next subsection deals with the *Yoga* system. *Yoga* means to join or to unite. It means the conjunction of the finite self and the Supreme Being. It also gives us the rousing knowledge about the *Ashtanga Yoga*. Here, the author has also some criticism for yoga, especially Patanjli's views about God. Then book gives descriptions about the *Mimamsa* system. This is a short topic where there is the discussion about the doubtful points in the ritual or philosophy. Basic thinking is "if God is creator, we cannot imagine of the period before creation." So, they hold that God is unnecessary to explain the phenomenal world and its change. Finally, at the end of the first part, there is a treatment on the *Vedantas*, namely *Advaita*, *Visishtadvaita*, *Dvaita*, and *Suddhadvaita.*

The second part of the book, "*Nastika Darsanas*," deals with two indigenised religions that are Jainism and Buddhism. The discussion throws in light on these topics. We get an over all idea about the epistemology, cosmology, and formal ritual practices of these religions. Also there is a diminutive presentation of the *Charvaka* philosophy. The very term *charvaka* means a philosophy of pleasure.

As a whole, Swami Vikrant, the author has succeeded in systematically bringing out the mainstream philosophical discussion in view of the needs of beginners in Indian philosophy. The discussion is clear enough to lead a reader to comprehensive understanding; this is especially so as the author draws parallel from the western philosophical paradigms as well. We wish that this would definitely help the students as a manual on Indian philosophical systems.

Manu Augustine

Delio De Mendonca, *Jesuits in India: Vision and Challenges*, Gujarat, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2003, pages xxiv + 380, ISBN: 818788678-1.

Jesuits in India: Vision and Challenges is a compilation of papers presented on the occasion of the 450th death anniversary of St. Francis Xavier. It is edited by Delio de Mendonca. This is an attempt to draw a neat sketch of the arrival and missionary works of Jesuits in India. This book could have the power to lead the readers into the historical background of India and the political set up found in India and the influence of Christianity on the Indian culture. Some of the papers in this edited book show the difficulties and dangerous situations faced by the Jesuit missionaries in the 'wild land' – India. They had to fear the animals, beasts, and snakes during their journeys and it was so difficult to get any medical help in the case of illness. Moreover, due to the problems of language and a culture with which they were not at home, the missionaries suffered a lot, especially in communicating with the local people. Gradually, however, they mastered the local languages and contributed much to the systematisation of those languages and the healthy development of literature from local communities.

Another attractive feature of this book is the fact that it provides a comprehensive picture of the spiritual life of St. Francis Xavier. We can feel and experience the personality and missionary activities of St. Francis Xavier, which continue to inspire countless Jesuits and others. The entire book is filled with the face of a zealous missionary who was admired more and popularly known as their 'protector' by the local people and that is no one other than St. Francis Xavier. He taught, converted, and helped the poor people in society, especially the Konkani and Tamil people and lived for them by adapting their own culture and his own vision in the missionary works.

This volume contains not only information about the past Jesuit missionary works and visions, but also highlights their present activities and approaches. It also hints at the need of reorientation to the Jesuit charism and Xaverian spirituality to make the missionary approaches more effective in the present. As we go through the pages of this book, we see the role of Jesuits in the social reformation of India, especially in the education sector. They established schools and colleges and equipped the Indians to run their institutions by admitting the Indian youth into the Society of Jesus. They converted so many people and supported their lives with various projects. In general, the book stresses the fact that the social, economical, and educational sectors in some parts of India enjoy the effect of the Xaverian vision and the Jesuit mission.

The Jesuit sentiments towards the Madurai mission and the attitude when they were called back from Goa are very clearly seen in this book. Some papers hint at the new areas of services needed and the precious insights to help the Society of Jesus to enlarge its vision.

The twenty-seven chapters of this book are very different and unique in content and outlook. Every Jesuit can be proud of these articles, as they pave the way for self-esteem and self-recollection. The book is easy and simple in style and content.

Raju Nellissery

Baiju Julian and Hormis Mynatty, eds., ***Catholic Contributions to Bioethics: Reflections on Evangelium Vitae***, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007, pages xxi + 464, ISBN: 81-7086-408-9.

The book, *Catholic Contributions to Bioethics*, is a special volume reflecting on the themes envisaged in the Encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, of Pope John Paul II. The primary task of *Evangelium Vitae* was to address the issues related to the fast emerging branches of study, applied ethics, bioethics, etc. Its prophetic overtones make this document relevant even today.

Evangelium Vitae was compiled with the express purpose that it is read by the lay faithful, as a matter of fact, by all people of good will. For Pope John Paul, "the cause of life is the cause of the Gospel entrusted to the Church, which is duty-bound to raise her voice in the defense of life." It is this same awareness that every Christian is called upon to familiarize, assimilate, internalize, and finally express in action in their everyday lives. It is within this framework that the articles in *Catholic Contributions to Bioethics* become a must-read. Though the articles lack the pathos and force of arguments of *Evangelium Vitae* to the "scientifically and systematically programmed threats" against life, they nevertheless highlight the key moral and legal issues that govern most of these bioethical issues.

To the uninitiated in bioethics, the book has interesting contributions on all the important and relevant aspects of bioethics: abortion, human cloning, stem cell research, and genetic engineering, to name a few. Expounded in simple and lucid style, the contributions initiate the reader into the myriad issues that challenge the Catholic Church today. It also impresses by virtue of the richness of Catholic contribution to theological ethics.

The book debunks the misconception that those who hold strong religious opinions are antagonistic to scientific investigation. Though scientific progress in biotechnology, such as gene-mapping, is welcome and necessary, its potential for abuse and misuse is a very real and frightening possibility. In fact, it is continued and subtle exploitation of life for profit that we need to be aware of. Furthermore, technology and progress that are apparently promoted as solution to the global problems of hunger and disease ultimately unveil a subtle quest for power and selfish gain that would remain in the control of a few.

The book does a good job of sensitizing its readers to the prevailing issues that promote a "culture of death" in relation to the "culture of life." In particular, the grave moral illicitness involved in taking all innocent human life, especially at its beginning and at its end, is well studies and critically confronted. The result of such 'death' practices is a further marginalization, neglect, and ultimately elimination of the weak (read as new-born and elderly) and the poorer sections of society. In a world that is rapidly losing its sense of sin due to progressive weakening of individual consciences, its only salvation can come from a life empowered by Jesus, the "word of life." Chew on that!

Francis Lobo

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NATIONAL INTEGRATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

James Gurudas◆

1. Introduction

Anyone having a sense of belongingness to a nation has to hold fast to the ideal of national integration. For, there will be no progress in any realm of the nation without the unity of its citizens and of all its constitutive elements and structures. Disintegration means disunity, and disunity means moving towards degeneration, decomposition, and destruction.

This article deals with a few aspects of Indian national integration in the light of the fundamental principles of liberation theology, which is synonymous with the theology of liberation.[1]

2. Meaning, Implications and Nuances of Integration

2.1. Integration in General

To integrate means all the following: to make a whole out of parts; to join the separated parts into the already existing body; make the parts functional by assembling them into a unit; to restore the functional unity of the disintegrated parts; to bring together a variety of persons or groups as a viable large group; to bring the distant or separated individuals into a social group to make them part of the whole group; to enable the scattered individuals to join the life of the community; to incorporate the estranged or abandoned or neglected individuals into the mainstream of the society. Integration means, therefore, functional unity in all realms of the nation – social, political, cultural, religious, linguistic, territorial, etc. It means also gender integration – harmony between men and women – and also coordination between urban and rural citizens.

◆**Dr. James Gurudas** CMI, who holds a Doctorate in Theology from the University of Bochum, Germany, was Dean of Studies at the Bhopal Regional Seminary in Ashta, and associate and visiting professor in several seminaries and theological institutes. At present he is the director of Snehavani: Centre for Interreligious Fellowship at Adichira, Kottaym, Kerala.

[1] It is not within the purview of this study to mention all authors and books on Liberation Theology, as our primary interest is liberation in relation to integration.

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2.2. Relevance of the Biblical Model

Since this article is written from Christian theological point of view, it is not out of place to mention at the very outset the biblical model of integration.

Biblically, national integration means national communion. There was *perfect caring, sharing and mutual bearing* in the early Christian Community:

> Now *the whole group* of those who believed *was of one heart and soul*, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet and it was *distributed to each as they had need* (Acts 4:32-36).

It seems appropriate to corroborate this passage with another one: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:44-45).

What is remarkable in the quoted passages is that *the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is perfect communion of his disciples, a communion-based community wherein all members and all dimensions of the community are perfectly integrated.* In other words, *where there is integration, there lives the risen Jesus.* This implies also that the primary mission, commission, and obligation of all Jesuans (disciples of Jesus) is creation of universal communion – in our context creation of national communion. A close look at the communion of the early community will make it clear that it was based on the principles of genuine liberty, equality, and fraternity, which, centuries later, became the slogans and ideals of the French Revolution, in spite of its aberrations and inner contradictions. Genuine integration cannot be subject-object or active-passive relationship. Integration can mean only mutual integration on the basis of freedom, because the members of a nation are human persons having the same dignity and respectability as persons and citizens. It is possible that the rich integrate the poor into their economy just for utility purpose. The high caste people may accept the low caste out of necessity and solely for exploitation of their labour potential. This kind of integration does not imply mutual acceptance, respect and appreciation. Therefore, *integration should result in an 'association', which accepts* *others as socii (fellows or friends). Love-motivated association is the best form of integration.*

Equality and dignity of persons does not exclude dissimilarity on the social level. The Arian division of society into four groups, on the basis of natural talents, was a practical and justifiable setup taking into account the natural or genetic dissimilarity of human persons. We could even say that it was a beautiful setup according to the Augustinian definition of beauty: "*parium dispariumque apta dispositio*" – suitable setting together of similar and dissimilar parts. A human endowed with muscle-power alone is not fit for study and teaching and one who is intelligent but physically frail and fragile cannot wield weapons. That is to say, equality does not even indicate Procrustean equality, i.e., seeking to enforce physical uniformity by forceful methods. There will always be social and economic differences in any society. The important point is that just needs of all are met, exactly as in the primitive Christian community. Their resources were not distributed equally but according to the need of each and every one.

For a Jesuan (disciple of Jesus), national integration is nothing but national fellowship, though it sounds too idealistic, or even fanciful and utopian. It is Jesus' boundless love that enabled him to have fellowship with people of all social classes, the rich and the poor, men and women, Jews and Gentiles, the noble and the outcaste, the moral and the immoral, Pharisees, prostitutes, and tax-collectors. He criticized the Pharisees mercilessly for their legalism, formalism and ritualism; at the same time, he had no hesitation to be their guest.

2.3. National Integration and Hindutvaism

In the process of Indian national integration, one should proceed with extreme caution against the religious nationalism of Hindu fundamentalist groups, like RSS, VHP, Bajrangdal and the Ramanism of the BJP, as they create the impression that national integration is unachievable unless Hinduism is permitted to devour all other cultures and religions in India. This religio-national chauvinism should be fought against, because it overlooks or neglects or connive at the complexity of Indian culture. "Hindutva religious nationalism is not capable of responding to the quest for equality and justice on the part of the identities – the marginal and the regional."[2] The mistake of Hindutvaism is that it binds the Indian nation with Hindu religion. It denies the bare truth that religion by its nature is beyond all territories. "Nation is essentially bound to a particular territory, whereas a religion can be professed in different nations. Further, the state is co-related to the concept of citizenship which is different from nationality. State and nation need not be coterminous."[3] India is not a nation or state with a single religion. It is a civilization with a variety of religions. "A civilization encompasses many and divergent cultures, traditions and religions, and it goes beyond the relationship of individual citizens to the nation-state as in the case of modern state-formation in the West. The concrete reality of the Indian nation-state should reflect the reality of India as a civilisational entity."[4] Hinduization of India will always remain a utopia, because it is not ready to accept the complexity of Indian situation.

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[2] Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dream and Christian Hope: At the Dawn of the Millennium*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, 215.

2.4. The Inadequacy of LPG

The capitalist agenda of liberalization, privatization, and globalization does not have much to do with genuine Indian national integration. The main reason is that there exists the danger of creating a suitable atmosphere for the big fishes to swallow the small ones. What is urgent in the present Indian context is humanization, i.e., improving the Indian situation in a way which makes it conducive to the welfare of the whole people, especially of the weaker sections: the poor, the illiterate, the oppressed, the down-trodden, the untouchables, and the marginalized or peripheralized. It means utilizing Indian legislature, executive, and judiciary for ensuring the equality and dignity of all Indians and the just distribution of Indian resources.

Felix Wilfred is quite right when he pinpoints two evil consequences of liberalization and globalization, namely 'amnesia of the poor' and 'eclipse of social consequences'. What he means by the first is the forgetfulness of the poor and the oppressed and their exclusion at all levels.

> In the feudal system the slaves were ill-treated, but they knew that they were wanted; in the traditional caste-organization, the outcastes were discriminated against, but they knew that they were wanted. For, without them and their toil the society could not function. But, today, the worst thing happening with globalization is that the poor

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[3] Wilfred, *Asian Dream and Christian Hope*, 216.
[4] Wilfred, *Asian Dream and Christian Hope*, 217.

> are told in many words that they are not wanted, that they are a burden, and that they are simply redundant. The whole atmosphere seems to be charged with the spirit of eugenics and philosophy of the survival of the fittest. The concrete way of expressing it is to exclude the poor from every sphere. Exclusion is writ large at the very core of globalization and economic liberalization.[5]

What is meant by "progressive eclipse of social consciousness and responsibility" is the disregard for the poor and the marginalized in the national economic planning." This anaesthetising of social consciousness and responsibility is the worst thing that has happened. For, "it strikes at the very root of our capacity to envision a different order of things and a different kind of society."[6] National integration should not mean feeding the rich to make them richer and the richest as fast as possible. It has to primarily mean empowering the weaker sections of the society to stand on their heels in association with the stronger sections. According to Amartya Sen, if anybody wants to strengthen a chain, he/she should strengthen the weaker links first. If the already strong links are further strengthened the chain will break

3. India's Disintegration in the Words of Prophet Ezekiel

Needless to say, the people of India are not so scattered or divided as the People of Israel described by Prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 37:1-14). But his description of its disintegration can be adopted and adapted to throw some light upon various aspects of disunity and lack of coordination and subordination among the Indian people.

Look at the Indian "bones": Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jain bones; Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra and so many such caste-bones; the tribal bones; the Dalit bones; linguistic bones like Aryan and Dravidian; territorial bones in the form of states; political bones in the form of ego-centric parties; cultural bones; economic bones in the form of the rich and the poor; gender-bones as men and women! Who "will cause" a unifying "breath to enter" them? Who will join together the "two sticks" South and North India?

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[5] Wilfred, *Asian Dream and Christian Hope*, 47-48.

[6] Wilfred, *Asian Dream and Christian Hope*, 47-48.

4. Applicable Insights from the Liberation Theology

Many aspects of the theology of liberation can be made use of for the realization of India's national integration. A few important ones are mentioned below.

4.1. Comprehensive Approach

Liberation theology, which is a praxis-bound systematic reflection on the society which neglects the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized and search for possible solutions of their problems in the light of Jesuan vision, Exodus event, prophetical teaching, etc., aims at the all-round liberation of humans, liberation in all its aspects. "In its theological usage the concept of liberation has three levels: *the socio-political level*, i.e., liberation of the oppressed: "exploited classes, despised ethic groups, and marginalized cultures'; ... *the anthropological level*: liberation for a qualitatively different society with a human dimension; ... *the theological level*: liberation from sin, the ultimate root of all injustice and oppression, for a life of community and participation. And it is the task of a responsible theology of liberation to go through these three levels and articulate them in a differentiated account."[7] The integration of Indian nation should be as comprehensive as the liberation envisaged by liberation theology.

4.2. Socio-economic Contextualization

Special mention is to be made of liberation theology's insistence on socio-economic analysis as its very matrix.[8] A liberation theologian is not an arm-chair academician, playing skilfully with arid and abstract concepts, fabricating syllogisms with *a priori* propositions, deducing conclusions that are irrelevant for the existing society, or doing intellectual gymnastics for enjoying rational self-complacency. On the contrary, he speaks every word in a definite socio-economic context, and puts every word into the same context. In this sense, his theology may be called situation-theology just as situation-ethics. That is why Gustavo Gutierrez defines liberation theology as "critical reflexion on praxis in the society in the light of faith."[9] The main characteristic mark of a liberation theologian is its

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[7] Rosini Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate*, May Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1988, 8.

[8] Kuno Fuessel, "*Theologie der Befreiung*," in *Neues Handbuch theologisher Grundbegriffe* IV, Muenchen: Koesel, 1985, 202.

[9] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1973, 6.

"concrete participation in the liberation struggles of the oppressed."[10] Concrete participation means combining critical theory with sincere liberative action. One could even say that liberation theology "is biased towards praxis and calls for a consistent practical and pastoral mediation following the social analysis made and the theological reading given. The prior acceptance of socio-analytical mediation and hermeneutical mediation ensures a correct articulation of the relationship between theology and praxis."[11] A liberation theologian is a dedicated politician and theologian, at the same time. He is a social worker and theoretician. In speculative theologizing, the relation between theory and practice is dealt with in purely theoretical manner. In liberation theology, however, theologizing follows active engagement for the liberation of the enslaved and the oppressed. Here discussion on reality does not mean conceptual or theoretical reality. The reality that touches a liberation theologian's heart and head and motivates him to deal with it critically and theoretically is poverty, oppression, and other miseries of the people. "Theology of liberation … is concerned primarily with the concrete situation and practice, which is the foundation, the object and the conditioning framework of mental reflection and intellectual cognition."[12] Consequently, liberation theology itself has a temporal and transient character, because formulation of a theory is dependent upon the liberative practice of the theoretician. Truth cannot be devised, invented or contrived by theory. On the contrary, theory should correspond to and be truthful to the practice of liberation of the socially and economically enslaved. Similarly, Indian theologians are duty-bound to speak and write always in the concrete context of India[13] and to practice what they communicate.[14]

4.3. Preferential Option for the Poor

Theology of liberation is not a theology for the sake of theology. Far from being an arm-chair theology, it insists on being practical in favour of the down-trodden and under-privileged. It "presupposes *a prior political and*

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[10] Fuessel, "*Theologie der Befreiung*," 202.

[11] Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate*, 11.

[12] Fuessel, "*Theologie der Befreiung*," 207.

[13] S. Kappen, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation," in Paul Puthenangady, ed., *Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation*, Bangalore: ITA and NBCLC, 1986.

[14] Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1989, 30-35.

ethical option in the light of the gospel, for the poor: liberation theology has chosen the option of evaluating social reality from the viewpoint of the poor, of reflecting theologically from the cause of the poor and acting for the liberation of the poor."[15] Biblical hermeneutics, according to liberation theologians, is hermeneutics of the poor and for the poor. Their theology is nothing but the voice of the voiceless and cry for justice to be done to the poor.

Unlike the traditional theologians, liberation theologians do theology with the poor. They "listen to the yearnings and laments of the poor, live with them, accompany them with advice and action on their difficult paths and begin to do theology out of this togetherness."[16] Liberation theologians are of the firm conviction, that not only professional theologians and ecclesiastical authorities, but also the ordinary faithful as a whole are entitled to evangelization and theologizing. In their view, the spirit of God and spirit of Jesus are not the monopoly of the *magisterium* of the Church. Each and every member of the people of God should make use of his/her brain to discern the will of God and express it in their own words.

Therefore, the best field for cultivating genuine theology are the basic communities, in which professional theologians and ordinary faithful have equally important roles to play. Systematic theology has no rights of its own. It is expected to represent the experience of the faithful, especially of the poor, quite faithfully, and to formulate them systematically to attain integral liberation for which they are struggling. "Theology is always the second step, and never the first. The first is engagement in the practice of liberation in the society, and the proclamation of the Word of God related to it."[17] The people of God are not mere objects of indifferent and dispassionate theological discussions to be done by professional theologians. A theologian who is not actively involved in the liberation of the people is not worthy of that name.

Theological statements are to be verified by their practice and practicability in the society of the poor and the exploited. Practice has always primacy over theory. Indeed the criterion for the veracity of theological proposition is always their applicability in the concrete situation of the people. This view is a resonance of Mahatma Gandhi's famous statement that for the poor bread is the truth.

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[15] Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate*, 9.

[16] Fuessel, "*Theologie der Befreiung*," 204.

[17] Fuessel, "*Theologie der Befreiung*," 205.

Any theologian or even any writer having a heart for poor human beings will side with the poor and fight for the solution of their problems.[18] He or she will necessarily have the attitude of the famous Malayalam poet Vayalar Ramavarma who sang: "*Snehikkyayilla njaan novumaatmaavine snehichchitathoru thatvasasthratheyum*" ("I will not love any philosophy that does not love the suffering humans"). Liberation theologians all over the world – whether in Latin America, Africa or Asia – have always held to this principle of preferential option for the poor without prejudiced judgment on the rich.

Likewise, anyone who speaks about national integration in India should have a soft corner for the poor, because they constitute the majority of the Indian people. That more than 240 million Indians live below poverty line and more than 370 million are illiterate provide more than a shocking information to any sensible Indian; and this should be the primary consideration in any sort of engagement for national integration. All theologians are obliged to appropriate the words of Yahveh in the Book of Exodus: "I have observed the misery of my people… I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them…" (Ex. 3:7-8). Such liberation is the first step to national integration.

Liberation theology is undoubtedly a science; but for a liberation theologian "preferential option for the poor is the political and epistemological locus where science and partiality mediate subjectively and objectively."[19] Therefore, a sincere liberation theologian is not and cannot be ashamed of partiality for the poor and the oppressed.

4.4. Liberation of Theology

Preferential option for the poor naturally impels a liberation theologian to liberate theology itself from the clutches of ecclesiastical imperialism. Traditional theology not only dealt with dry and abstract concepts that have no relationship to the concrete situation of humans, but also aimed at perpetuating the enslaving systems and structures of the official Church in the name of faith, Jesus, and God. This slavish and sycophantic theology is of no use to the oppressed and the marginalized. What can the poor profit from metaphysical Trinity, metaphysical Christology, highly sophisticated theology of grace and such other theological treatises, which have no concern for the suffering of the people and do not take into account the appalling horrifying and scandalous contradictions in the Church and society. If there is theology at all, it should discuss God, the giver and protector of life,[20] Jesus the liberator, Church as the community of the liberated, etc. That is, liberation theology should be understood also as liberation of theology that is imprisoned in bourgeois ideology.[21] Liberation theologians are quite aware of the history of European and American colonialism. The Spaniards and North Americans had no scruples to justify slavery and subjugation with theological arguments supplied by European theologians. Right for private property meant for them right to amass wealth even at the cost of the poor. Even today European theology

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[18] Segundo Galilea: *The Spirituality of Evangelization*, Bangalore: Claritian, 1982, 40-45.

[19] Fuessel, "*Theologie der Befreiung*," 202.

> does not realize the price to be paid for a theology, the insights of which are angered on the experiences of slums, prisons and torture cells of military dictators. He who stands on the threshold of violent death and reflects on the cross and resurrection of Jesus and the political resistance of an oppressed people will keep his formulations away from the criteria of speculative orthodoxy and they will obtain a new cognitive quality on the basis of their perplexity.[22]

That is why theology is to be liberated from its non-liberative and anti-liberative understanding.

According to liberation theologians, the traditional separation between body and soul, nature and grace, natural and supernatural, reason and faith, science and religion, sociology and theology, secular and sacred, profane and holy, earthly and heavenly, material and spiritual, political and ecclesial, etc., is obsolete and impertinent.

Magisterium-controlled theology defines its orthodoxy without allowing it to be sufficiently qualified by the developments in the society. Hence, control of theology from above[23] should be balanced by control from below. Instead of excluding or minimizing worldly realm, theology should take into account the multidimensionality of human existence and multiple-causality of human welfare and social development.

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[20] Gustavo Gutierrez, *The God of Life*, Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1981, 3-19.

[21] Fuessel, "*Theologie der Befreiung*," 206.

[22] Fuessel, "*Theologie der Befreiung*," 206.

[23] Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1976, 126-133.

The ideal of liberation theology is absolutely relevant in the context of national integration. Christian theologians are expected to develop a new theological hermeneutics conducive to social and economic liberation and all-round national harmony.[24] The need of the hour is not a missiology persuading Indian Christians to lure Non-Christians by all means into the inescapable labyrinth of structuralized Christianity, but a theology that can liberate the poor and the oppressed, and integrate them into national communion.

5. Liberative and Integrative Factors

Integral liberation of all Indians and a fully integrated Indian nation is the ultimate goal to be reached by each and every Indian citizen. There are many resources in India that can be utilized, so that this dream may come true. It should be kept in mind that here we speak of national integration in the light of liberation theology and not of politics, economics, or such other subjects.

There are two categories of resources that can be made use of: 1) Religious resources and 2) Models of liberators and integrative leaders.

5.1. Religious Resources

Though India is constitutionally a secular state, the majority of Indians are so religiously charged that purely secular ideologies like Marxism and Naxalism have only a very limited influence on them. They are not the basis of India's hope. The secular nature of the state means only that before the Constitution all religions have the same status and rights. According to statistics, 80.5% of the population are Hindus, 13.4% Muslims, 2.3 % Christians, 1.9% Sikhs, 0.97% Buddhists, and 0.47% Jains. All these religions deserve due regard in any discussion on national integration. But because of the decisive influence of Hinduism on India, its resources are given special consideration in this article. It is not within the scope of this article, to discuss the religious literature thoroughly by quoting the numerous pertinent texts. What is feasible is to depend on reliable studies of the literature, made from the viewpoint of liberation and integration.

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[24] Mathew Paikada, *Indian Theology of Liberation*, Delhi: Intercultural, 2000, 211-216.

5.1.1. Vedas and Upanishads

Vedas, which are the main normative religious books of the Hindus, do not directly deal with social and economic liberation of humans. Apparently, they are interested in the discussion of cosmic powers, sacrifices, etc. However, when they are taken as a whole, we can see in them concern for the all-round welfare of human beings. In the Vedas,

> we find a very wholesome attitude to the terrestrial realities and the secular concerns of man. Human fulfilment is considered to be intimately related to the orderly and harmonious functioning of the cosmic elements – earth, water, fire, air and space together with the biological and temporal cycles. Evil, suffering and hardship were not unknown to the Vedic man, and yet he did not consider human condition as essentially fallen and suffering as quite normal.[25]

The ultimate concern in the Vedas and Upanishads is perfect happiness of every individual and, thus, of the whole humankind.

5.1.2. Liberative View of *Bhagavatgita*

The authoritative scripture for an average Hindu is *Bhagavatgita*. Even though, primarily, it seems to deal with the three ways of *jñāna*, *bhakti*, *and karma* (knowledge, devotion, and action) to attain God, it is keen on stressing the unity of humankind and the equality of all human beings because of the indwelling Brahman in all of them. If all Hindus, who constitute the majority of Indian population, were faithful to the teaching of the *Gītā*, caste system, untouchability and such other evils would not have any place in India; and inner unity of Hinduism would pave a short and smooth path to national integration. The *Gītā* says: "A wise human sees equality in a Brāhmaṇa imbued with learning and humility, in a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste" (*Gītā* 5:18). No Hindu who reads this passage can have a positive attitude to casteism which, according Mahatma Gandhi, is the foremost curse of Indian nation. The *Gītā* says also that, if one's mind is united with Got, "he sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself; he sees the same in all" (*Gītā* 6:29). The question is: Why do the upper caste Hindus neglect or forget such instructions of their highly revered religious scripture.

Unity and welfare of all is a point much emphasized by the *Gītā* but ignored or disregarded by the majority of Hindus: "Action out of a holistic vision of reality is action for the integral transformation of society. The structures which break society into fragments are removed and an integration is envisaged. *Gītā* calls it '*lokasamgraga*' (3:2, 25). *Samgraha* means holding together, coherence, harmonizing work. *Lokasamgraha* is therefore *Gītā*'s word for universal welfare, social justice in the full sense of the term. The fulfilment of *svadharma* gets thereby an objective motivation, the creation of a more humane and just society."[26] It is paradoxical that those who uphold the *Gītā* as a God-given scripture have very little or no social consciousness and urge for creating an integrated Indian society.

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[25] Louis Malieckal, "Libetative Vision of the Vedas," in Puthenangady, ed., *Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation*, 46.

5.2. Role Models for Liberative and Integrative Engagement

There are a few Indians who should be considered as sublime models in the realm of liberative and integrative action. Chronologically the first one to be mentioned is Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) who was a versatile scholar and founder of Brahma Samaj fought against all kinds of superstitions and social evils within Hinduism and tried to reform it in an integral way. What he did through Brahma Samaj for the integral reform of society is enormous. Rejecting idolatry and polytheism, which were quite normal for ordinary Hindu believers, he preached monotheism and accepted the Gospel passages that have relevance for social wellbeing, insisted on the need of rational approach to scriptures and ethical purity, opposed *sati*, casteism, child marriage, etc., and pleaded for the right of widows for re-marriage and for the all-around freedom of all individuals.[27] All-round freedom for every individual and for the society as a whole was the goal he strived to achieve. "Ram Mohan Roy, like Voltaire, Montesquieu and Rousseau had a passionate attachment to the concept of liberty. He urged the necessity of personal freedom and in his private conversations also referred to the ideal of national emancipation. Liberty is a priceless possession of the human being and hence Ram Mohan was a magnificent champion of personal freedom. But liberty is also needed for the nation. Ram Mohan had a keen appreciation of the uncompromising freedom, the creative spirit."[28] Unlike Mohan Roy the majority of Hindus think of freedom individualistically and in too narrow a religious sense, namely as the right to reach God in any way one likes. What India is presently in need of are reformers like Roy, who understand freedom as the ability to dedicate oneself for the total liberation of fellow-humans.

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[26] Sebastian Pynadath, "Bhagavata Gita's Vision of Liberative Action," in Puthenangady, ed., *Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation*, 60.

[27] Antony Chirappanath, "Indian Renaisance and Liberation," in Puthenangady, *Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation*, 168.

Dayananda Saraswathi (1824-1883) and the Arya Samaj he founded, took up many of the ideas and ideals of Mohan Roy, but asserted the need for returning to the Vedas. He too rejected caste system and preached equality of all human beings and the necessity of combining social activities with individual spirituality. According to him, nobody who is selfish can be spiritual, and freedom from selfishness means preferring social welfare to purely individual interests.[29] At least two more liberators are to be mentioned in this context: Annie Besant (1847-1933) who, with her Theosophical Society, worked untiringly for India's national welfare[30] and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) who, in accordance with the teaching of his master Sri Ramakrishna, gave a new interpretation to Vedanta and combined action with contemplation and founded Ramakrishna Movement, which gave a new dimension to Hinduism itself.[31] Worthy of tribute are also E. V. Ramaswamy[32] and Swami Agnivesh[33] and several others.

M. K. Gandhi (1869-1948): In any discussion on integral liberation and national integration the most important person to be considered as archmodel is M. K. Gandhi, who is the Mahatma par excellence for Indians.

Without abandoning his Hindu religious roots and, at the same time, drawing inspirations from the Gospels and modern thinkers like Fyodor Dostoyevski, he gave a new interpretation to the teachings of *Bhagavatgita* and the Hindu concepts of *Bhakti* (devotion), *mokṣa* (liberation), etc., and concretely showed the world how a really liberated human should live: self-dedication for fellow-human beings is the proof of real spirituality.

The dream, for the realization of which he spent his whole life-energy was *Rāmarājya* (Kingdom of Rāma) where all are equal and have the same dignity, rights and obligation for common welfare. "The goal of Gandhi for India can be called integral liberation based on a perspective of spiritual humanism."[34] His ideal of *satyāgraha* (holding fast to truth, adherence to truth) does not mean mere loyalty to scriptural words, or abstract ethical or philosophical principles. It means truth-based love for all fellow beings. That is why he held the view that truth for the poor means food for every day.

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[28] Chirappanath, "Indian Renaisance and Liberation," 164.

[29] Chirappanath, "Indian Renaisance and Liberation," 169-170.

[30] Chirappanath, "Indian Renaisance and Liberation," 170-174.

[31] Chirappanath, "Indian Renaisance and Liberation," 174-176.

[32] Michael Amaladoss, *Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia*, Delhi: Vidyajyothi, 1997, 101-107.

[33] Amaladosss, *Life in Freedom*, 97-101.

> With Gandhi, *satyāgraha* is the way out of alienation, bondage or unfreedom. Our imagery of the 'way' out is inadequate to convey Gandhi's truth. It is more the entry point to authenticity, integration and inner freedom extended to the social sphere as *Satyāgraha* is not even the means to a freedom conceived as an end. Rather it is itself the concrete experience or realization of freedom in authenticity and integrity as an actuality for the *satyāgrahi* and as a possibility or potentiality for those who aspire for freedom. *Satyāgraha* is not a way in the sense of a technique of liberation. But it is the way in the sense of the style or mode of achieving liberation.[35]

Satyam (Truth) can be interpreted as honesty, integrity, love, freedom, etc. For Gandhi, all virtues are implied in the one word 'truth'.

Gandhi's famous ideal of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) is closely related to liberation and integration. Non-violence "is not merely a negative state of harmlessness, but it is a positive state of love, a state of doing good, even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of *ahimsa*, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically."[36] It is evident that non-aggressive fight against all those who perpetuate poverty, oppression, and discrimination is an integral part of *ahimsa*.

According to Gandhi, in a liberated society, all are equal, though each one has particular duties to fulfil. This may be the reason why he did not condemn caste system. However, the ideal of each member should be the welfare of all (*sarvodaya*) and there is no question of concentration of power and authority in a small group at the top; even a small village *panchayath* will have a say on national planning and execution of projects.[37] An honest research into the ideas of Gandhi will convincingly make it clear that one of the main reasons for the existing social and economic inequality in India is disregard for his vision. Forgetting Gandhi means forgetting the means and ways for social and economic liberation and national integration.

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[34] Amaladosss, *Life in Freedom*, 89.

[35] Ignatius Jesudasan, "A Gandhian Theology of Liberation," in Puthenangady, ed., *Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation*, 224.

[36] *Young India*, Jan. 19, 1921, cited in Jesudasan, "A Gandhian Theology of Liberation," 226.

6. Hindrances to Liberation and Integration

It may not be out of place to mention here a few hindrances blocking integral liberation and national integration. The main hindrance is, in my view, the religious verticalism of Hindus, who constitute the majority of Indian population. One cannot but admit that for the majority of them spirituality is individualistic and ego-centric.[38] Everyone seeks his/her own liberation in his/her own way, and bakes bread for himself/herself alone. A fatalistic attitude to life, owing to belief in *karma* (abiding effect of each human act in the previous life), also contributes to such a spirituality. One who walks with his/her chin pressed upon chest cannot see those standing around him/her. Without liberating oneself from individualistic and narcissistic spirituality, as Mahatma Gandhi, Ram Mohan Roy and others did, one cannot be motivated for national welfare.

As mentioned above, horizontal dimension is not unknown to Vedas, Upanishads, *Bhagavatgita*, *Puranas*, *Ithihasas*, etc. Unfortunately, this dimension seems to be eclipsed in the case of the majority; and eclipse of concern for fellow beings in one's religiosity necessarily implies retardation of social development, liberation, and national integration.

The basic difference between Hindu religion and the two main Semitic religions – Islam and Christianity – is another hindrance. Linguistic traditionalism – the opposition between Aryan and Dravaidian language families – is also an obstacle, though not very huge, to national integration. Mention should be made of political parochialism too. There are only very few politicians who think of India as motherland and nation. The characteristic mark of the majority is thirst for power and parochial political manipulation.

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[37] Jesudasan, "A Gandhian Theology of Liberation," 228-229.

[38] For details of Indian egoism, see Cedric Rebello, *The Bible: Aspirin or Dynamite*, Bombay: ATC, 1983, 111-116.

7. A Christian Solution

Since this article discusses national integration from the angle of liberation theology, which is typically Christian, I am prompted to make mention of the liberative and integrative power of Jesus' message.

Jesus dedicated his life for the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, who constituted 90% of the Jews at his time and were nicknamed by the elite as '*ham-ha-ares*' (people of the soil, uncultured people). The poor were also illiterate; they were out-castes because of their mingling with Non-Jews and eating meat forbidden to Jews.[39] Only those who were highly learned, i.e., well-versed in the Thora, and exceptionally holy, i.e., who blindly and meticulously kept the religious laws, customs, and traditions of the Jews were entitled to be called children of God. Jesus respected the poor as children of God and taught them to call God Abba, Father.

What impelled and enabled Jesus to do so was his spirit (Hebrew: *ruah*; Greek: *pneuma*). Spirit means power. The inner power that moved him vertically and horizontally was his Abba-Consciousness. He had a consciousness (*bodham*) about God, namely, "God is my Father and Father of all." This consciousness was also his conviction (*bodhyam*). By the communication (*bodhanam*) of this conviction he tried to liberate his people from their superstitions, laws, and traditions that were for them fetters and shackles. In other words, Jesus experienced God as Father; this experience was his faith, and he preached this faith as his good news to the people for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, i.e., universal harmony under the sway of God.[40] All Christians who are engaged in liberative and integrative activities should "look at Jesus the pioneer and perfector of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Pioneer is one who marches in front of all. Those who march behind Jesus, motivated by his Abba-Consciousness, will be empowered to empower others; they will be liberated to liberate others, especially the untouchables, the dalits, the tribals, the fishermen, women, etc. As Martin Buber says, faith of Jesus unites us, faith in Jesus divides us.

By raising the poor from their miserable situation the Jesuans will be able to give witness to the risen Jesus; "the pursuit of the same values that

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[39] Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, London: Darton, 1977, 21-29.

[40] Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, London: SPCK, 1980, 55-57.

Jesus held dear is an indispensable prerequisite for being able to 'see' and recognize the risen one."[41]

The Hindu belief that each *jīvātma* (individual spirit) is the manifestation of the *paramātma* (Absolute Spirit) is also quite liberative and integrative. So is the Muslim belief that all humans are Allah's creatures. In short, in India religious means for liberation and integration will be more effective than the political ones, even though these too are essential.

8. Conclusion

The logical conclusion to be drawn from our discussion on Indian national integration, in the light of liberation theology, is the following: National integration is unattainable without the integral liberation of all, especially of the poor and the oppressed. Only the liberated can be united by communion, fellowship. The natural effect of national communion will be national integration. Therefore, a *metanoia* – change of mind – which is effected mainly by the utilization of Indian religious resources, is the first step on the road to national integration.

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[41] Juan Luis Segundo, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1985, 171.

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COSMOPOLITANISM, GLOBAL ETHIC, AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Dominador Bombongan, Jr.[◆]

1. Introduction

We live in a world of "'overlapping communities of fate' where nations' destiny is significantly intertwined,"[1] argues, David Held. Indeed, our world has become so globalized[2] that concerns have been raised on how to make sense of (a) the scope and extent of justice as well as duties across nation-states, (b) the coverage of transnational political and social realities, (c) the limit of complex affiliations, meaningful attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, people and places,[3] and (d) the parameters of global democracy and world citizenship. The dramatic transformations that the processes of globalization have brought about, call for a new way of relating to the socio-economic, cultural as well as political realities of our times. This article, then, attempts to provide some suggestions on how to better respond to our rapidly changing world. The article is a *triptych*, consisting of three inter-related themes namely that of cosmopolitanism, global ethic, and inter-religious dialogue. Each attempts to provide a meaningful avenue to relate to the globalized world yet united in one

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[1] David Held, "Globalization, Corporate Practice and Cosmopolitan Social Standards," http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Publications/PublicationsProfHeld/GlobalizationCorporatePractice.pdf (accessed, August, 2006), 4,

[2] Globalization is "a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity, and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power." David Held, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, 16.

[3] Steven Vertotec and Robin Cohen, "Introduction: Conceiving Cosmopolitanism," http://www.oup.co.uk/pdf/0199252289.pdf (accessed, August 2006).

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overarching goal which is the promotion of the good of humanity regardless of race, culture, sex, and religion.

2. Cosmopolitanism

In recent times, cosmopolitanism has generated a renewed and widespread appreciation in social and political theories. Such a fresh interest in the said issue has been occasioned by the pressing issues related to the globalization, global governance, and global civil society. These three interrelated processes are responsible for the continuing significance of cosmopolitanism for our times.

2.1. Origins

Cosmopolitanism traces its beginnings back to the Stoics. The cynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (c. 400-323 BC) is believed to have set off this cosmopolitan sentiment in his famous statement, "I am a citizen of the world." Contrary to the Aristotelian ideal of the *polis*, Diogenes sees man as a multicultural animal who is a *kosmopolitēs*, that is, a citizen of the 'cosmos', or the universe.[4] Human beings are first and foremost 'citizens of the world' (*kosmou politê*) and only secondarily or accidentally are members of a single political community (local origins, local group membership-polis). All human beings, the stoics hold, constitute a single community where every person possesses moral worth equivalent to one's own.

The 18th century saw Immanuel Kant giving an actual legal and juridical elaboration to this general ethical sensibility of the Stoics. Through his ideas of the categorical imperative[5] and the kingdom of ends[6] Kant holds that certain universal/objective law can be enacted as bases for the promotion of freedom, justice, and happiness of human beings, as rational beings. Kant, for example, wrote: "So, act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means."[7] Kant's moral theology dovetails with his juridical framework of public law. For him public law has three components, namely, the civil law (*ius civitatis*), international law (*ius gentium*), and cosmopolitan law (*ius cosmopoliticum*). Such laws can be embodied in a cosmopolitan constitution where a common set of laws can be stipulated as a common basis for bringing about peaceful mutual relations and reciprocal understanding among nations (league of independent states), especially on issues of peace, freedom, and treatment of strangers (immigrants).

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[4] Derek Heater, *World Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Thinking and Its Opponents*, London: Continuum, 2002, 27.

[5] A categorical imperative necessitates an absolute and universal moral obligation. The idea was popularized by Immanuel Kant. His ideas on the subject matter are inscribed in his *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788).

[6] Kant's notion of categorical imperative is a corollary to his notion of an ideal moral community called kingdom of ends. The kingdom of ends, a sort of a legislative body is the methodical union of rational beings who actively participate in creating universal laws meant to guide them in their exercise of justice and freedom.

Contemporary theorists of cosmopolitanism differentiate between institutional cosmopolitanism (reshaping of political structures to meet the changes of the times) from moral cosmopolitanism (moral standards to make sure that political theory and practice respect the "*humanum*" as the ultimate unit of moral concern). Several typologies[8] on cosmopolitanism have been presented, however, most agree on three basic tenets of cosmopolitanism: (1) Individual persons are the ultimate units of concern, not states or other particular forms of human association. (2) The status of equal worth and recognition should be enjoyed by all. (3) This status of equal worth should be acknowledged by all persons without any exception.[9]

While cosmopolitanism is sometimes equated with being privileged, bourgeois, elitist, or being an intellectual/scholar, not to mention its reference to being a frequent traveller, a tourist, and a cosmocrat,[10] there is a deeper meaning to cosmopolitanism that deserves to be retrieved. Cosmopolitanism actually denotes respect for others, dialogue, formation of complex identities, shared human values, etc.

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[7] Hayden, *Cosmopolitanism*, 19.

[8] Derek Heater presents six major typologies based on six authors. Heater, *World Citizenship*.

[9] Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002, 169.

[10] Cosmocrats are the new global economic elite, a meriocratic but elusive ruling group, e.g., wealthy jet setters, corporate managers, financial experts, intergovernmental bureaucrats and academics who have been trained abroad. See Vertotec, "Conceiving Cosmopolitanism," 5.

2.2. Characterizations

The contemporary notion of cosmopolitanism has several elements.

2.2.1. A Dialogic Imagination

Imagination plays a central role in cosmopolitanism. Imagination is an active act of consciousness that discloses what is in the world but, at the same time, reveals what is possible in the world. It is a mediating act between what is and what the imagined relationships of the self, the world, and the future could possibly hold for all. Described differently, as a form of imagination cosmopolitanism would attempt to ask questions like, What happens if the self is enmeshed in a wider constellation of other selves? What becomes of one's self-identity when other different life stories are readily available for examination? What probable horizons are open for a world that is rapidly interconnected? What is the future of cultures, of politics and of ethical discourses in a world where there are no outsiders? Such a questioning is facilitated by what Ulrich Beck calls "a dialogic imagination." This form of imagination necessarily recognizes the legitimate uniqueness, distinctiveness or even the strangeness of the other, whether these are persons, cultures, traditions, civilizations, rationalities, other ways of life, heritages, etc.[11] Cosmopolitan imagination allows one to "compare, reflect, criticize, understand, contradictory certainties"[12] about life in general. It involves a basic act of negotiating and disclosing varied and even contradictory cultural experiences into the very centre of one's day-to-day personal decisions in life. Dialogic imagination brings into one's cognizance the following realizations:[13] (1) Clashes of cultures happen in my life. (2) We have globally shared collective futures in a society where everyone is implicated; hence, the need for global responsibility. (3) It is a commitment to dialogue; hence, it is against violence. (4) It is we who construct/invent/create our personal/communal identities through the process of self-reflexivity as we encounter others. This imagination has an aversion for an environment that nurtures (a) ethnic nationalism and postmodern relativism leading to sectarian acts of violence and eccentricities of extremists (fundamentalism), (b) neo-liberal globalization (globalism) which threatens democratic freedom by radicalizing social inequalities and revoking the fundamental social justice and security, and (c) democratic authoritarianism resulting in the loss of achieving consensus in a democratic way. Expressed differently, dialogic imagination attempts to be inclusive and if possible defend our place as one open to the world.[14] The enemies of the cosmopolitan imagination are those who think that life is monochromatic. The danger of a monolithic imagination is that it is one-sided and cannot allow for the existence or even the survival of the *different.*

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[11] A cosmopolitan model nourishes a dialogic imagination while a nation-state model of societies develops a monolithic form of imagination. The latter is exclusive and involves an either-or looking at the world. It always excludes what does not belong to its boundaries. See Beck, *Cosmopolitan Society*, 18 (online edition).

[12] Beck, "Cosmopolitan Society," 18.

[13] Beck, "Cosmopolitan Society," 18-38.

2.2.2. An Intellectual Aesthetic Stance of Openness

Cosmopolitanism is a basic orientation or stance in life. It speaks of a way or a path in which one makes sense of life in general as well as the manner in which one creates meanings in one's life. As a stance and orientation, it needs to be cultivated or nourished the way one perfects a particular craft. In the end, it becomes really a matter of competence. Ulf Hannerz argues that a genuine cosmopolitanism is "first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with Other. It is an intellectual aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity."[15] Through "listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting" the cosmopolite develops a competence/skill/talent to participate in other cultures but also to make sense (manoeuvre through systems of meanings) of these diverse experiences in himself or herself. To be a cosmopolite entails a mastery of one's culture plus a surrender to the other. But by surrendering, one also achieves further mastery of one's own. For, through the lens of the other, he/she understands/clarifies, even corrects, more his or her own ideas, praxis, and background. It is in this sense that we can say that cosmopolitanism has a therapeutic function. It cures the myopia, that is, our short-sightedness and lack of (dialogic) imagination and intellectual insight about the power of the strange or the unfamiliar to give us a general sense of wellbeing.

2.2.3. A Minimal Common Ground for Action

Cosmopolitanism offers a possible galvanizing framework in a world characterized by a growing, multifarious, and even competing political and cultural actors that transcend the nation-states[16] (conventional locus of authority and power). In a global village, there is a need to bring people together toward a particular objective for the common good. Cosmopolitan ideals generate mediating structures aimed at developing common principles as a general reference point of action and forming institutional arrangements for diverse groups, political entities and associations to deal with complex socio-political-cultural issues afforded by the process of the trans-nationalization of experiences. As a result of a genuine dialogue by all involved parties, these arrangements seek the protection of basic humanitarian values regardless of countries of origin.

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[14] Beck, "Cosmopolitan Society," 35.

[15] Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," cited in M. Featherstone, "Global Culture," *Theory, Culture and Society* 7, 3-4 (June 1990), 239.

In the political arena, for instance, David Held (among others such as Daniele Archibugi Andrew Linklater, etc.) advocates a global political agenda with his notion of cosmopolitan democracy. Accordingly, persons should be protected by a juridico-political system to ensure that human beings can exercise their autonomy. The principle of autonomy in the sense of the human capacity to reason self-consciously, to be self reflective and self-determining must be assured by a cosmopolitan democratic law. In an era marked by overlapping communities of fate, cosmopolitan political and ethical spaces need to be created to bridge simultaneously local, national, regional and global concerns, and where trans-boundary issues (beyond the nation-state) are resolved such as peoples' equal moral worth, their active agency, and concerns for autonomy and development.[17] "Unlike political nationalism, cosmopolitanism registers and reflects the multiplicity of issues, questions, processes, and problems which effect and bind people together, irrespective of where they were born or reside."[18]

Culturally, cosmopolitan principles and institutions offer venues where issues related to identity politics, ethnicity, immigration, issues on multiple affiliation/allegiances or citizenship can be talked about.

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[16] David Held names the essential elements of a nation-state paradigm: (1) members have a common socio-cultural identity; (2) there is a common framework of prejudices and objectives leading to a common political ethos; (3) an institutional structure exists which protects and represents the community; (4) congruence and asymmetry prevail between a community's governors and governed; (5) members enjoy a common structure of rights and duties due to the preceding items mentioned above. Held, "National Culture, the Globalization of Communications and the Bounded Political Community," *Logos* 1, 3 (Summer 2002; online edition), http://www.logosjournal.com/issue-1.3pdf (accessed, August 2006), 5.

[17] Vertotec, "Conceiving Cosmopolitanism," 13.

[18] Held, "National Culture," 11.

Individuals can now assume complex, overlapping, changing, and often highly individualistic choices of identity and belonging.[19] So, for Held, we need more and more to learn how to behave as cosmopolitan citizens. Cosmopolitan citizenship "involves a growing mediating role: a role which encompasses dialogue with the traditions and discourses of others with the aim of expanding the horizons of one's own framework of meaning, and increasing the scope of mutual understanding."[20] The political democratic communities of the future should afford multiple citizenships to people. "Faced with overlapping communities of fate they need to be not only citizens of their own communities, but also of the wider regions in which they live, and of the wider global order."[21] As Nick Stevenson would put it, cultural cosmopolitanism is going beyond national exclusivity, the dichotomous forms of gendered and racial thinking, or even the rigid separation between nature and culture. It seeks to appreciate various ways in which humanity in general is involved in layers of intercultural involvements. For him, then, cosmopolitan thinking involves "the transgression of boundaries and markers and the development of an inclusive democracy and citizenship."[22] This is achieved through creating cultural spaces for communities of communication and consent.

Economically, cosmopolitan ideals related to economic practices can be a starting point to discuss the repercussions of a neoliberal form of economic globalization especially to the disadvantaged countries. Here, a cosmopolitan framework of accountability and regulation – a cosmopolitan social standard – can be developed to "reframe neoliberal economic globalization."[23]

3. The Global Ethic Project[24]

Modern day cosmopolitan values may be a fertile ground toward the promotion of a global ethic. Hans Küng's book *Global Responsibility* contains a blueprint for a global ethic. In it, he signifies the need for one basic ethic for our global village. He argues that rather than seek a sort of a unitary religion or a unitary ideology, what needs to be promoted are "some norms, values, ideals and goals to bring it together and to binding on it."[25] To this task, he identifies religions of the world as wellspring for these ethical demands. The world religions have enormous responsibility for world peace. They should, therefore, work together toward this endeavour. According to Küng, there is no survival without a world ethic, no world peace without peace between the religions, and no peace without dialogue between the religions.[26]

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[19] Vertotec, "Conceiving Cosmopolitanism,"·14.

[20] Held, *Global Transformations*, 449.

[21] Held, *Global Transformations*, 449.

[22] Nick Stevenson, *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Questions*, Berkshire, UK: Open University Press, 2003, 5.

[23] Held, "Cosmopolitan Social Standards," 11-14.

[24] Marcus Braybrooke, informatively, chronicles the initial reflections of different world bodies on the idea of a shared ethic that led to the eventual development of a global ethic project. See Marcus Braybrooke, *Stepping Stones to a Global Ethic*, London: SCM, 1992.

3.1. The Need for a Global Ethic

Our postmodern world, with its epoch-making changes, has produced a vacuum of meaning, values, and norms. Socialism, neo-capitalism, and the evolutionary-technological ideology of progress with their one-sided stress on rationality and unlimited growth used to function as "scientific total explanations and attractive quasi-religions."[27] Today these ideologies are bankrupt. Because of their perceived failures, countries are experimenting with mixed economy (eco-social market economy or social democracy). Nation-states are venturing into a more holistic approach to development that takes into account both the eco-socio-political aspect of life and the aesthetic, ethical and religious dimensions of human beings.[28] Küng, generally sees these developments as positive, but even so, a lack of specific reflection on ethic will eventually lead these achievements to nothing. He states:

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[25] Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*, New York: Crossroad, 1991, xvi.

[26] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, xv. Küng gave an initial presentation of his project in Paris, February 1989, as the main speaker in a symposium organized by the educational services of the UNESCO. The topic of the symposium was the significance of the world religions for the UNESCO program "Education towards Respect for Human Rights." In the elaboration of the project, Küng takes his inspiration from the "conciliar process" (Basel 1989) which sought to promote ecumenism among the Christian churches through a common commitment to "justice, peace, and the integrity of the earth."

[27] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 12.

[28] Küng sketches his blue-print of holistic postmodern society in the following way: "from an ethic-free society to an ethically responsive society; from a technology which dominates people to a technology which serves the humanity of men and women; from an industry which destroys the environment to an industry which furthers the true interests and needs of men and women in accord with nature; from the legal form of democracy to a democracy which is lived out and in which freedom and justice are reconciled." Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 20-21.

> Without a minimal basic consensus on certain values, norms and attitudes, no human society worth living in is possible in either a smaller or a larger community. Even a modern democracy cannot function without such a basic consensus, which constantly has to be rediscovered in dialogue; indeed, it collapses in chaos or a dictatorship...[29]

Küng, therefore, pleads for a reflection on ethics, i.e., the basic (minimum) moral attitudes of human beings that direct their decisions and actions. This is especially urgent for postmodern people who dabble in randomness, colourfulness, and anarchistic trends of thoughts and lifestyle, in short, a methodological anything goes. There is need to strive for a new basic consensus of integrative humane convictions.[30] Put concisely, people need universally binding ethical norms or global standards without which we will experience socio-eco-political catastrophes and disintegration. For the third millennium, the most appropriate ethical orientation is planetary responsibility.

3.2. Towards an Ethic of Responsibility

A global ethic of responsibility strives to achieve the balance – a middle way – between ethic of success and a mere dispositional ethic. On the one hand, a single-handed emphasis on an ethic of success, asserts Küng, brings about crass libertism and Machiavellianism. The reason is that it would, then, justify "an action for which the end sanctifies the means and for which whatever functions, brings profit, power or enjoyment, is good."[31]

On the other hand, a one-sided stress on mere dispositions and inner convictions (justice, love, and truth) may "justify terrorism on grounds of disposition." For, it fails to account for the consequences of its actions or decisions. According to Küng, such ethic is unhistorical for its failure to acknowledge historical contingencies. Moreover, it is also unpolitical because of its neglect of the complex dynamics of society and the power play involved in it.

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[29] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 28

[30] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 22.

[31] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 29.

The challenge is to stir the middle course between the two. What is needed is an ethics of responsibility along the lines of Max Weber and Hans Jonas. Weber in a speech in 1918/19 stood for an ethic that asks "realistically about the foreseeable 'consequences' of our action and takes responsibility for them."[32] Hans Jonas, in a similar way, speaks about the need for a global responsibility for the world in the light of our endangered planet due to the preponderance of instrumental rationality. He calls for "a self-imposed limitation by human beings on their freedom in the present for the sake of their survival in the future."[33] Both for Weber and Jonas, a dispositional ethics and an ethics of responsibility are complementary. They are both needed for a potent political action. Küng puts it this way:

> Without a dispositional ethics, the ethics of responsibility would decline into an ethics of success regardless of disposition, for which the end justifies any means. Without an ethics of responsibility, dispositional ethics would decline into the fostering of self-righteous inwardness.[34]

An ethic of responsibility is a call for social and ecological responsibility. Eventually, however, the goal of the ethic of responsibility must serve the betterment of the *humanum*.

3.3. *Humanum*: The Goal and Criterion

Küng holds that politics, economics, science, and religion should put humanity into the focus of their concern. All these forces in society must work together to bring about "what preserves and furthers thus humanity."[35] In a Kantian way, he holds that "... whatever projects one plans for a better human future, the basic ethical principle must be that human beings may never be made mere means. They must remain an ultimate end, and always be a goal and criterion..."[36] In view of the furtherance of the *humanum*, Küng develops an ecumenical strategy for interreligious dialogue. He finds strategies like the exclusivist, relativist, inclusivist approaches wanting.[37] He proposes to make the *humanum* the universal ecumenical criterion for dialogue among religions. True and authentic dialogue is measured by the degree in which the *humanum* (human dignity, wellbeing) is enhanced. A religion is true and good to the degree that it serves humanity; likewise a religion is false and bad to the degree that it disseminates inhumanity.

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[32] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 30. See the famous lecture of Max Weber, "*Politik als Beruf*" in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, Tubingen: Mohr, 1958, 505-60.

[33] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 30. See Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

[34] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 30.

[35] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 31.

[36] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 31-32.

3.4. Religion as the Foundation of Global Ethic

The real point, however, that Küng wants to make is that no ethic of responsibility can be firm and solid, unless it draws its inspiration from religion. A global ethic that is solely founded on a rational or philosophical basis (e.g., Kant's categorical imperative or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) will not be as generally binding for the whole as a global ethic which is anchored in religion. The former, he maintains, "cannot give a reason for the absoluteness and universality of ethical obligation."[38] Religion, Küng holds, provides a certain unconditional "oughtness" that motivates a person to follow norms in (1) an unconditionally binding way (and not just where it is convenient for me as a matter of personal taste or judgment), and (2) in a universal way (for all) even if this means sacrificing one's own interests. A rational or philosophical ethics (such as Kant's categorical imperative) may claim a universal applicability, but it lacks a real, absolute grounding from which to raise this claim. In other words, one may or may not follow the prescription of the Universal

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[37] An exclusivist or fortress strategy presupposes that there is only one true religion in the world. The rest are false religions: "*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*" ("no salvation outside the Church"). True religious peace can be achieved only through the one true religion. A relativist position plays down differences and sees all religions as basically the same in essence. Religious peace is achieved by ignoring their differences and contradictions. An inclusivist position believes that there is one true religion and that the rest takes part in its truth. Religious peace is obtained by the embrace of the "one true religion" by others. Typical approach here is the idea of anonymous Christianity. See Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 79-88.

[38] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 51. A purely philosophical ethics on a rational basis runs the risk of circuitous reasoning since we cannot make absolute norms from a basis that is not absolute in itself, worst, in the case of such a basis, one runs the danger of making something absolute (a grand narrative) out of a non-absolute, thus, making a particular norm universally binding to all. See G. De Schrijver, "Some Reservations about Hans Küng's World Ethic," *MST Review* 3, 1 (1999), 87.

Declaration of Human Rights. Küng succinctly explains it in the following words:

> An unconditional claim, a 'categorical' ought, cannot be derived from the finite conditions of human existence, from human urgencies and needs. And even an independent abstract 'human nature' or 'idea of humanity' (as a legitimizing authority) can hardly put an unconditional obligation on anyone for anything. Even a 'duty for humankind to survive' can hardly be demonstrated conclusively in a rational way.[39]

Küng, therefore, stresses that the firm grounding of ethical demands will not simply depend on philosophically 'established' criteria of the wellbeing of all human beings. The anchorage is found in the mystery of the Absolute present in the religions. The universal and unconditional obligation to stand up for the *humanum* grounds itself on the *divinum*. He writes:

> Nowadays – after Nietzsche's glorification of 'beyond good and evil' – we can no longer count on a 'categorical imperative' which is quasi-innate in all, and make the wellbeing of all human beings the criterion for our own action. No, the categorical quality of ethical demand, the unconditional nature of the ought, cannot be grounded by human beings, who are conditioned in many ways, but only by that which is unconditional: by an Absolute which can provide an overarching meaning and which embraces and permeates individual, human nature and indeed the whole of human society. That can only be the ultimate, supreme reality, which while it cannot be proved rationally, can be accepted in rational trust – regardless of how it is named, understood and interpreted in the different religions.[40]

3.5. Function of Religion

Although religion has been judged negatively – as projection or alienation (Feuerbach), opium of the people (Marx), or psychological immaturity (Freud) – Küng emphasizes the need to take religion seriously in our contemporary analysis of our postmodern-globalized world. Failure to do so is to "fail to do justice to an essential dimension of human life and human history, whether one affirms it or denies it."[41] Although, religion can be narrow-minded, authoritative, reactionary, and tyrannical, at times, we must not lose sight of its liberating elements.

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[39] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 52.

[40] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 52-53.

[41] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 45.

Küng provides four general reasons why he highly values religion.[42] (1) It communicates a specific depth-dimension, an all embracing horizon of meaning even in the face of suffering, injustice, and meaninglessness and even at death. (2) It provides the *raison d'etre* for our responsibility, for it guarantees supreme values, unconditional norms, and deepest motivations and highest ideas. (3) Its common symbols, rituals, experiences, and goals foster a sense of trust, faith, certainty, security, hope, and even a sense of community and allegiance. (4) It provides the seeds for protest and resistance against oppressive situations by its longing for the 'wholly Other' which is already now at work and which cannot be stilled. The positive functions of religion allow him to challenge the different world religions to come up with ethical demands that will contribute to our responsibility for world peace. For world peace to be realized, it needs the special commitment of religions. He encourages them to let go of their differences and contradictions and work for "what holds them together in spite of everything – with a view to the principle of responsibility."[43]

Küng comes up with six decisive perspectives that are common to world religions and which are needed in view of constructing a global ethic.[44] (1) Human wellbeing: all religions advocate with authority the furtherance of the wellbeing of the *humanum* as basic principle and goal of human ethics. This is seen, for example, in the Jewish command to love God and fellowmen, or it is stipulated in the Sermon on the Mount. The Quran emphasizes justice, truth, and good works. This is also seen in the Hindu concept of *dharma*, etc. (2) Maxims of basic humanity: the world religions are in agreement with certain basic ethical norms for guiding actions such as, (a) do not kill, (b) do not lie, (c) do not steal, (d) do not practice immorality, and (e) respect your parents and love your children. (3) A reasonable middle way: the teaching of the world religions emphasizes the need to take account not only of one's actions but also of the consequences and responsibilities inherent in these actions. They require not only the observance of rules but also nurture the dispositions and virtues that guide human conduct. (4) The golden rule: the golden rule is categorically and unconditionally required in the different religions. Different formulations of the golden rule are manifested in the world religions. (5) Moral motivations: all religions provide convincing moral motivations for people by the authentic and living examples of the lives and teachings of their revered figures, such as Buddha, Jesus Christ, Confucius, or Muhammad. (6) A horizon of meaning and identification of goal: in a world where people experience meaningless and emptiness in life, all religions offer a meaning and goal in life whether they call it, eternal life, *moksha*, or *nirvana*.

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[42] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 54.
[43] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 55.
[44] Küng, *Global Responsibility*, 56-60.

4. A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics

In his book, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (1997),[45] Küng builds on what he started in his *Global Responsibility* (1991). Here he reiterates the need for a global ethic (basic moral attitude) that will influence the conduct of politics and economy and will serve as the foundation of global society. A global ethic, he maintains, is neither a new ideology, nor superstructure, nor does it presuppose a single global culture. It has no ambition to replace the ethics of different religions with something like an ethical minimalism. The Torah, the Bible, or the *Bhagavadgita* remains foundational for the faith and life of their respective followers. The global ethic project is about "the necessary minimum of common human values, criteria, and basic attitudes."[46] To put it concisely, it is "... a *basic consensus* on binding values, irrevocable criteria, and basic attitudes which are affirmed *by all religions* despite their dogmatic differences, and which can indeed also be contributed by *non-believers*."[47] Our present day politics and economics need such an ethic.

4.1. Responsible Politics and a Middle Course

Küng distinguishes between real politics and ideal politics. The former is identified with Henry Kissinger and his political predecessors such as Nicoló Macchiavelli (1469-1527), Comte de Richelieu (1585-1642), and Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898). Real politics is "concerned not only with the politics of rights but also with politics of power, which attempts to calculate and impose national interests coolly, unhindered by moral feelings, and which therefore can easily take on inhumane features." The issue here is power play (increasing and maintaining one's power).

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[45] Küng differentiates between ethic and ethics. Ethic refers to the "basic moral attitude of an individual or a group, whereas ethics means the (philosophical or theological) theory of moral values, norms and attitudes." *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, London: SCM Press, 1997, 93.

[46] Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, 92.

[47] Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, 92-93.

The latter view is identified with Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924). The ideal politics is "concerned not with 'geopolitics' but with 'conversion' of the kind that is necessary at any epoch-making paradigm shift."[48] Wilson's global policy, for example, consists of ideals such as freedom for all peoples, justice for all, and peace through the League of Nations. What is at stake here is purely moral motivation and good aims, e.g., national unity, peace, human rights, etc. Küng rejects these two extreme features of politics and opts for a middle way between them, in the spirit of an ethic of responsibility we have sketched above. A new paradigm of *responsible* politics is one that is not only cognizant of political prowess but also of ethical convictions. Küng explains:

> Only an *ethic of responsibility* is of any use for a new world order. It presupposes conviction, but realistically seeks the predictable consequences of a particular policy, especially those that can be negative, and also takes responsibility for them. The art of politics in the postmodern paradigm consists in combining political calculation (of modern real politics) convincing with ethical judgment (ideal politics).[49]

The new humane paradigm of politics, then, consists of political actions guided by ethical considerations.

4.2. A Responsible Economy

Küng's analysis of global politics applies to the global economy. Globalization, he claims, has brought about a structural revolution in the world economy. Neo-liberalism and the preponderance of the market have taken reign of society. A *responsible* economics, however, does not have profit maximization as its foundation. Küng points out that the "interests, constraints, and calculations of economic rationality must in no way overwhelm the fundamental demands of ethical reason and of the great religious traditions."[50] Social Darwinism should be avoided. Economic forces that nurture humanity must prevail. The global economy must be guided by a basic global ethic that benefits the wellbeing of all humans, their societies and the environment. The new ethic of the global economy "combines economic rationality with a basic ethical orientation."[51] This clearly points to an ethic of responsibility.

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[48] Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, 30.

[49] Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, 66.

[50] Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, 213.

A responsible politics and economics will draw from the resources of religions for their main source of ethical conviction. There is, therefore, a need that world religions as well as the representatives of other institutions (businessmen, politicians, economists, media practitioners, artists, etc.) come together for a dialogue toward a global ethic that links rights as well as responsibilities.

4.3. Interreligious Dialogue in Asia: A Dialogue-of-Life

Interreligious dialogue, in Asian style, entails a three fold dialogue: a dialogue with the poor, a dialogue with other religions of Asia, and a dialogue with Asian cultures. This represents a consensus among Asian theologians as stated by the *Working Paper* (*Instrumentum Laboris*) worked out by the *Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops* (April 19-May 14, 1998).[52] This threefold dialogue provides the "concrete manner for announcing the person and message of Jesus" to "inspire and provide a method for the church's mission" (WP 37). The method "brings closer together the elements of dialogue and mission/evangelization and it gives the believer the opportunity to immerse oneself into the life-world of the poor, as well as Asian religions and cultures."[53] This interreligious approach to dialogue is embodied in, what Asian theologians call, dialogue of life. Michael Amaladoss explains:

> For us Asian Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and others are part of our life. We share a common culture and way of life. We belong to a common economic and political system. We have a common history. Our religious differences have cultural, political, and even economic implications. In this ongoing dialogue of life, we have begun to appreciate the believers of other religions. We respect and read with profit their scriptures and other sacred writings. We learn from their *sadhana*, methods of prayer, and religious experience. We regard positively their moral conduct. We collaborate with them in the promotion of common human and

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[51] Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, 234.

[52] For critical comments on the Apostolic Exhortation, see Felix Wilfred, *Ecclesia in Asia and the Challenges of Evangelization*, http://www/carmelifekgprovince.in/amc5.pdf (accessed, October 2008).

[53] De Schrijver, "Mission," 12.

> spiritual values like freedom and justice, love and service. We do not feel superior to them.[54]

Dialogue of life begins with a reverential respect for other religious traditions. It happens at the level of day-to-day experiences of people or, as the WP refers to it, grass-roots approach to dialogue (WP 49). This implies a two fold task: (1) a concerted effort of different religions to find solutions to common material problems, and (2) as a result of this close collaboration, people with different religious persuasions must begin to discover, learn, and be enriched in the process. De Schrijver describes this grassroots approach to dialogue:

> For the dialogue of life, which also includes interreligious collaboration to combat dire poverty, is the concrete milieu in which believers of various religions come to appreciate what they have in common, as well as what they can really learn for each other. Indeed, Christians engaged in such a dialogue of life, are given the opportunity to acquaint themselves with a variety of cultural and cultic equivalents to their own faith that are present in other religions – whereas these equivalents, in turn, allow them to get a deeper understanding of their own basic faith convictions, which they now are able to better communicate to the others.[55]

The approach taken here with regard to interreligious dialogue happens on the level of shared experience of life realities. The WP enlightens us that, in Asia, the emphasis "has always been on religious experience rather than on dogma" (WP 47). The question is not "What do you believe? but on What has been your religious experience" (WP 47). Some respondents even consider that "such interaction is perhaps the only kind of proclamation possible in some parts of Asia" (WP 47). The WP continues to say that "Christ is better communicated not on the purely theoretical or verbal level in an orderly presentation of doctrines, but through a shared experience" (WP 47). Differently put, the only credible form of proclamation in Asia is when Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslim, encounter a Christian who is truly imbued with the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. The purpose of dialogue and proclamation is no longer seen primarily as strategy to win converts to Catholicism. But, now, they represent relationships where open communication and dialogue lead people of different religions to attempt to build a more just and humane society where everyone is reconciled to God. In short, it leads to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, through their close collaboration. Amaladoss expresses the strategy of dialogue that the Catholic Church should undertake:

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[54] Michael Amaladoss, "Interreligious Dialogue: A View from Asia," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19, 2 (January 1995), 2.

[55] De Schrijver, "Mission," 13.

> I think that the church is called to be at the centre of an international moral movement of people... I think that the appropriate image for today would be that of a people's movement that is committed to the building up of the Reign of God in this world. The church is aware of and rooted in its own identity as the body of the disciples of Christ, as witnesses in word and deed of the Good News he proclaimed, and as sacraments of unity of all peoples. Therefore, it needs to be a community with open frontiers, ready to dialogue and collaborate with everyone in the service of the Reign of God. It needs to be a community alive and sensitive to the mystery of God's action among peoples and in the world, often in ways unknown to it.[56]

5. Conclusion

In the Asian context – home of world religions, home of rich diverse cultures, and home of many of the world's poor – statistics (the number of newly baptized) is not an obvious priority. What is urgent is finding ways wherein various peoples with different religions and cultures can work together to confront the massive poverty and exclusion (caused by economic globalization) that many of Asia's population is beset with. Evidently, this is an approach to dialogue that will gain little support from the official organs of the church. Yet, as some missiologists would argue in this situation, we need what they refer to as eschatological patience. These missiologists "believe that God, as the true eschatological power, knows much better than any Christian organized religion engaged in mission how to attract the non-Christian believers to the core values of Christian life."[57]

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[56] Michael Amaladoss, "The Challenges of Mission Today" in William Burrows, *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993, 395-396.

[57] D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991, 505-506; 519, cited in De Schrijver, "Mission," 15.

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THE OTHER'S DIFFERENCE AND ETHICS OF PLURALISM IN LEVINAS

Siby K. George[♦]

1. Introduction

'Integration' – national, global, or communal – is necessitated primarily by the exigencies of 'difference', manifested either in hideous forms of hatred and violence, or in more subtle forms of grudging toleration and frozen interaction. It is from an awareness of difference, arising from varieties of social categories like sex, colour, race, caste, tribe, language, and religion, and the abjectly damaging consequences of personal as well as social interpretation of the significance of such differences that the goal of integration gathers urgency in a nation's priorities and an individual's value system. Any foundationist explanation of integration for its own sake may help to build an ideology, but may not be helpful in the realm of praxis. A usual strategy for promoting integration is to appeal to our common humanity, nationality, planetary citizenship, or to a common divine inheritance. The fact of 'differences', however, seems to override such appeals to generalities made out of honing the sharp edges of difference. Human beings, despite whatever they have in common, do form a radical plurality and resist the unifying tendencies by asserting and articulating their difference and uniqueness.

In the writings of Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), we have an alternative perspective that seeks to show 'difference' itself as the ground for coming together. Levinas was not merely a composer of philosophical texts;[1] he is even better known as a Talmudic commentator and there is a definite undercurrent of religious themes running through even his philosophical writings. Michael Purcell shows that Levinas draws a line of

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[1] Levinas' two most important philosophical texts are *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1969, and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981. Henceforth, references to *Totality and Infinity* shall be made in the text itself by using the abbreviation 'TI' and *Otherwise than Being* by the abbreviation 'OTB'.

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demarcation between his 'philosophical' and 'confessional' writings. They are 'distinct methods of exegesis', or 'separate languages'. However, he admits that drawing a strict line of demarcation between his philosophical and religious writings is a difficult proposal. Purcell writes: "Better to recognize that, at times, Levinas writes in a style that is more strictly philosophical and, at times, in a style which is more strictly religious. Nonetheless, it is the one Levinas who is writing, and from a singular ethical provocation."[2] In what follows, we shall have occasions to refer to the religious side of Levinas' ethical defence of pluralism. We shall now proceed to discuss various shades of Levinas' ethics and see how they contribute to a radically ethical vision of plurality.

2. Ethical Foundation for Radical Pluralism

Levinas' philosophical objective was amazingly focused and single-minded throughout an expansive span of over four decades of writing. Right from the early essays, he redundantly and untiringly harps on the same theme of "my absolute responsibility for the other," each time with more extreme and fresher expressions and rare passion. This he did in a France which was then overwhelmed by Sartre's existentialism and, then, by Derrida's deconstruction. There was no audience for ethics. Interestingly, his writings entered serious philosophical discussion through a mediation on Derrida's works.[3] Levinas' views, as may be that of many other writers, are born out of a single experience, the experience of the Holocaust, and the method he chose for writing was one that dealt mainly with human experience, i.e., phenomenology. Having studied under both Husserl and Heidegger in Freiburg, Levinas is credited with one of the most creative applications of Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. In fact, it was not in native Germany but in France that creative outcomes of the labours of Husserl and Heidegger came to light. Levinas' writings manifest a reflective spirit and his approach of laying bare the many layers of consciousness unwrapping for the reader a labyrinth of some strikingly new insights, an ethics without the do's and the don'ts, an originary ethics.

After the Holocaust, Levinas tried to write philosophically about that experience in a very direct manner. His oeuvre as a whole is a response to that phenomenon and its experience. While publishing the translation of a 1934 essay, "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism," in a 1990 issue of the *Critical Enquiry*, Levinas wrote a prefatory note for it. In this note, he pointed out that the source for Hitler's philosophy is not a "contingent anomaly within human reasoning," not an "accidental ideological misunderstanding," but its source was "the essential possibility of elemental Evil into which we can be *led by logic* and against which Western philosophy had not sufficiently insured itself."[4] He also succinctly wrote in that brief preface about his concern for the ontological project's character of 'gathering together' and 'dominating'. Elsewhere he would say that the western conception of philosophy and knowledge in general is a 'swallowing', 'devouring', 'generalizing', 'levelling', 'assimilating', and 'reducing'. It is about forgetting the dissimilarities and converging on the similarities, and again concentrating on the similarities of the similar and on similarities among the dissimilar. In that preface, he reiterated that what was to be called into question was the subject's freedom, a freedom to smother the other underfoot, a freedom to do whatever that could satiate the self. In Levinas' writings, we see the limits of the subject's freedom, which is ethics, and a limitless responsibility for the other. For us, this preface is crucial. It summarizes the philosopher's assumptions and his ambitions.

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[2] Michael Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 46.

[3] Simon Critchley, "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, eds. Critchley and Bernasconi, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 1-6.

For us, the Levinasian project is one of looking for an ethical foundation for radical pluralism. This foundation ought to be something beyond Christian universalism ('all of us are children of God') and modern liberalism ('all of us are free moral agents capable of laying out our own projects and achieving them by granting the other the same freedom'). Not that this foundation ought to be completely secular, but it ought to be human and drawn from human experience. Universalism does not touch at the heart of the other's otherness and liberalism bypasses the other's 'right' to exist as other, first and foremost. Hence, Levinas searches for a pluralism based on the other's absolute otherness. John Wild writes in his introduction to Alphonso Lingis' English translation of Levinas' first *magnum opus*, *Totality and Infinity* (1961): "It is the disciplined development of a pluralistic point of view that has not been thought through before" (TI, 19). Here, focus is not on a metaphysical pluralism of the existence of many entities or substances, but on the social condition of human multiplicity and difference, a fact which calls for integration of human difference rather than violating them for the sake of a unity. It is not that only social groups are multiple, as though within a group there is an intrinsic identity, as though an individual in a group can be adequately labelled under a group. For Levinas, the other person is absolutely irreducible to the same, the self. In the conventional understanding of the process of knowing, in the act of knowing the other – who or whatever be that other – that other, so to say, becomes part of 'myself'. She or he, if the object of knowing were the other person, becomes a mental picture concocted in my mind and resides there. I possess her or him and make her or him a prisoner of my image of her or him. I reduce him or her to my consciousness. As an intentional subject, I 'adequate' the other to the object in my consciousness. Levinas' protest is basically regarding such 'adequation' because, for him, there is no way I can master the other and reduce him or her to an image. The other stands wholly and entirely other to my attempt to level her or him to an image in my mind. This is the crux of Levinas' sustained critique of the whole tradition of western philosophy. Traditional philosophy, as an adequation, "leads inevitably to another power, to imperialist domination, to tyranny" (TI, 47). The other is an infinity that cannot be totalized. Levinas is looking for an ethical base for pluralism – the amicable, harmonious coexistence of human persons in society despite the fact of their inassimilable differences – that is averse to murder: symbolic murder of the other's otherness or literal murder as grotesque as six million human lives sacrificed in Hitler's gas chambers. For the subject, every other person is irreducibly dissimilar to her/him. Hence, not only the one who is culturally or otherwise dissimilar to me is a stranger: every other is a stranger, a foreigner and I am a stranger and foreigner to every other. In fact, the other is the neighbour, the face. In clarifying the aim of his first *magnum opus*, Levinas says: "The effort of this book is directed toward apperceiving Desire – where power, by essence murderous of the other, becomes, faced with the other and 'against all good sense', *the impossibility of murder*, the consideration of the other, or justice" (TI, 47; emphasis added).

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[4] Emmanuel Levinas, "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism," trans. Seán Hand, *Critical Enquiry* 17, 1 (1990), 63; emphasis added.

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas posits this 'consideration of the other' as unconditional hospitality and infinite responsibility for the other. We read in an early passage of the book: "This book will present subjectivity as welcoming the Other, as hospitality" (TI, 27) and, later, that "It is my responsibility before a face looking at me as absolutely foreign

… that constitutes the original fact of fraternity" (TI, 214). However, in his second *magnum opus*, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974), he further radicalizes the idea of responsibility by introducing the notion of 'substitution', which is an inversion of identity, 'one-for-the-other', 'having-the-other-in-one's-skin', 'incarnation', and makes possible the phenomena of sacrifice, compassion, and pity.[5] If TI is written in the classical hermeneutico-phenomenological style, OTB is stylistically more difficult, as it picks up a rhapsodic poesy of sorts after the young Derrida's penetrating and yet sympathetic critique of TI that while challenging the ontology of the same, especially in Heidegger, the work does not do itself any good by using the weapon of the language of phenomenological ontology to challenge that very ontology of adequation of the other with the same.[6] If in TI "The Subject is a host" (TI, 299), in OTB, "The subject is a hostage" (OTB, 112). Radical phrases like "I exist through the other and for the other" (OTB, 114), "obsessed by another" (OTB, 123), "unlimited responsibility" (OTB, 124) and the like make frequent appearances in the tightly woven text. Such a conception of the primacy of the other in thinking about an inter-subjective ethic found occasional space in the Russian novelist Dostoevsky, especially in his *The Brother Karamazov* (1880). While talking to Phillippe Neme, Levinas radicalizes this primacy of the other and refers to Dostoevsky's well-known passage:

> I am responsible for the Other without waiting for his reciprocity... Reciprocity is *his* affair... You know that sentence in Dostoevsky: '*We are all guilty of all and for all men before all, and I more than the others.*'… I am responsible for a total responsibility, which answers for all the others and for all in the others, even for their responsibility. I always have one responsibility *more* than the others.[7]

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[5] See OTB, 113-118, and Bernasconi, "What Is the Question to Which 'Substitution' Is the Answer?" in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, eds. Critchley and Bernasconi, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 234-251.

[6] Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, 111.

[7] Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Phillippe Neme*, trans. Richard A. Cohen, Pittsburgh, USA: Duquesne University Press, 1985, 98-99.

3. Ethics as First Philosophy

It is to be noted that Levinas does not take the word 'ethics' in a conventional sense as in virtue ethics, utilitarianism, deontology or as in the analytics of ethical language or as in metaethics. For him first philosophy is neither metaphysics nor ontology: "Morality is not a branch of philosophy, but first philosophy" (TI, 304). Ethics is the way of relating with the other, the way of seeing the other person. Alluding to Heideggerian *mitsein* (Being-with), Levinas says that before thought dawns, before ontologizing and totalizing, before thematizing and categorizing, there is already the relation with the other. In Heideggerian terms, Being-in-the-world is already, always, before hand a Being-with. But, unlike in Heidegger, Being-with is already ethical before it is captured in thought and ontologised. As we said earlier, the single underlying assumption of Levinas' work is to plead the impossibility, inconceivability of murder in the name of ideologies and generalizations. Through an evocative rather than expository prose, meditative rather than argumentative style of writing, Levinas wants to make sociality sanctified by appealing to an ever-guilty human conscience that relentlessly burns for not having fulfilled its known and unknown obligations. Even when distant hungry hungers and thirsts, even when anonymous mobs lynch the wailing stranger, even when unpreventable tsunami swallows up countless fishing hamlets, I feel guilty for having been not responsible enough for the other, the faceless other; guilty for my powerlessness to empower the powerless; guilty for my helplessness. Levinas defines ethics as "calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other" (TI, 43). That is, every face to face relation is a challenge placed on my freedom by the presence of the other and so it is ethical always already. What is ethical is the very act of relating, and it is this "relation which is ethical, not an ethics that is instantiated in relations."[8] While speaking to Anne-Catherine Benchelah in 1986, Levinas explains his phrase "ethics is first philosophy" more lucidly:

> When I speak of first philosophy, I am referring to a philosophy of dialogue which cannot *not* be an ethics. Even the philosophy that questions the meaning of being does so starting from the encounter with the other. This would amount to a manner of subordinating knowledge and objectivization to the encounter with the other that is presupposed in all language…

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[8] Critchley, "Introduction," 12.

> Even if there is ill will on the part of the other, the attention to and welcome of the other (like his recognition of me) marks the anteriority of the good over and against evil.[9]

In an insightful introductory essay on Levinas' ethics, Roland Paul Blum points out that as against the bounded ethics of great minds, like Immanuel Kant and John Rawls, which clearly lay down principles to show the limits of human obligations, Levinas' conception is one of unlimited obligation. In Rawls, for example, the representative human derives the ethical principles of conduct in society on the basis of rational self-interest and these principles, in turn, are a guarantee of human freedom and happiness in a social context. Levinas' thesis is that responsibility for others is a "permanent fact about oneself. It has never been consciously assumed and it can never be discharged."[10] This ethical bond between persons is not born out of comprehension, argument or already known principles, but from the sensibility of exteriority, one's experience of radical alterity, from the face. The sensible ego's subjectivity is thrust open by the encounter with alterity. Before the subject's freedom, before comprehension, alterity demands of the subject 'goodness'. Existence is weighed down by the "gravity of having to bear the burden of alien existence" (OTB, xxi) and what lies at the base of ethical relationship is not our specifically human nature, rational agency or moral imperatives, but our sensibility, our passive susceptibility and our material incarnation. If the human is a subjectivity, it is also a subjectivity face to face with an alterity. Its aloneness too is relative to alterity. The goodness in the subject that allows alterity is the ethical despite the temptation of the senses to devour and enjoy alterity as sameness. Ethics which questions the ego is accomplished as service, hospitality, welcome. In language, the manifestation of the ethical is accomplished. If the human was not originally ethical there was no need for a language. "… [B]ecoming conscious (of alterity) is already language… the essence of language is goodness… the essence of language is friendship and hospitality" (TI, 305).

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[9] Emmanuel Levinas, "The Proximity of the Other," trans. Bettina Bergo, in *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Jill Robbins, Stanford, USA: Stanford University Press, 2001, 211-212.

[10] Roland Paul Blum, "Emmanuel Levinas' Theory of Commitment," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 44, 2 (1983), 147.

4. Pluralism, Peace, Religion, the Underprivileged

The very last section of TI is titled "Being as Goodness – the I – Pluralism – Peace." We know that existentialism and many faces of and movements around subjectivity dominated the intellectual circles of France when Levinas brought out his first important work. It is also well-known that the finest exponents of the existentialist thesis, Sartre and early Heidegger, both frowned at intersubjectivity as an obstacle to the subject in its one-dimensional march towards individual authenticity and the overcoming of bad faith. Heidegger of *Being and Time* (1927) considers sociality as a necessary existential condition of *Dasein*, but 'the anonymous they' weighs down *Dasein* to everyday inauthenticity. Sartre's famed pronouncement "The other is hell" is representative of his radical subjectivity thesis. While Levinas admires Heidegger's attention to the concrete, the existential, even while articulating the classical philosophical problem of being, he abhors Heidegger's adoration of Being, especially after the latter's brief but provocative Nazi rendezvous. Given this context, undoubtedly, Levinas is thinking of both subjectivity and alterity and how they can coexist, not in militant opposition, war and violence, but in peace and goodness amidst the very impossibility of their opposites. In the final section of TI, Levinas says that the ethical relation with alterity is the ethical basis for pluralism.

> Transcendence or goodness is produced as pluralism. The pluralism of being is not produced as a multiplicity of constellation spread out before a possible gaze, for thus it would be already totalized, joined into an entity. Pluralism is accomplished in goodness… *The unity of plurality is peace*, and not the coherence of the elements that constitute plurality (TI, 305-306; emphasis added).

This conception of pluralism is to be carefully distanced from all totalizations. It is a forward movement of goodness emanating from the subject towards the other which positively allows the other her alterity and there is no totalization or generalization or truth ethically higher than this movement of goodness. While one is deeply immersed in this pluralist society, one transcends it in sheer goodness expressed in language. This pluralism of radical alterities manages to find rhythm is peace. Peace is not achieved in a uniformity, not in the end of war, not in a political system; it rather is a subjective condition of the I's goodness, an I satisfied with the merger of the ethical and the real. Ethical judgment of the truth of the subject's condition does not come from an impersonal reason or from a contract, but from beyond it, from the other.

In conceiving pluralism and peace as the I's goodness, we cannot pass by Livinas' allusion to a religious spiritual vision without caring to take a closer look at it. In all his writings, there is a passionate, almost Kierkegaardian commitment to the other, which at the base is religious.[11] In fact, for Levinas, ethics is religion: "We propose to call 'religion' the bond that is established between the same and the other without constituting a totality" (TI, 40). Drawing a distinction between politics and religion, he says that politics tends towards 'reciprocal recognition' and 'ensures happiness', whereas 'religion is Desire', "the surplus possible in a society of equals, that of glorious humility, responsibility, and sacrifice, which are the condition for equality itself" (TI, 64). Hence, religion is the very enactment of ethics. God, whom Levinas calls 'other than the other', 'other otherwise', "other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the other, prior to the ethical bond with another and different from every neighbour,"[12] is absolutely unknowable, but if any trace of Him is available, it is foreshadowed in the face of the other. Hence, "his being 'without resources' has to be heard like cries not voice or thematized, (but) already addressed to God."[13] That is why Levinas says that although the other is not the incarnation of God, his/her face "is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed" (TI, 78-79). In the earlier quoted prefatory note, Levinas says that the human person is already elected by God to the vocation of responsibility for the other and it is God who "beholds him in the *face* of the other man, his neighbour, the original 'site' of the Revelation."[14] Thus, Levinas calls the relation of the subject's responsibility for the other, the condition of being the hostage of the other, "the religiosity of the self" (OTB, 117). The subject being a hostage, its substitution is a witness to God: "The subject as a hostage has been neither the experience nor the proof of the Infinite, but a witness borne of the Infinite, a modality of this glory that no disclosure has preceded."[15]

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[11] See Wes Avram, "On the Priority of 'Ethics' in the Work of Levinas," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24, 2 (1996), 261-285.

[12] Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987, 165-166.

[13] Levinas, "God and Philosophy," 167.

[14] Levinas, "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism," 63.

[15] Levinas, "God and Philosophy," 169.

We need to note that Levinas was continuously anguished over the plight of the disadvantaged, the strangers, the refugees, those without a home or a country. A dignified space for them, a world of relations for them, he thought, would not be possible without such a conception of absolutely other-centred originary ethics. The subject is not a being that bears some qualities called moral; it rather is unique because of its ability to divest itself of its very being for the sake of the other, it can become a hostage of the other, it can subject itself to the universe (OTB, 116-117). We said that Levinas bases his ethics on a sensible, material plane, which is more sanctified than the sacred; it is the spiritual itself. He writes: "… one has to first enjoy one's bread, not in order to have the merit of giving it, but in order to give it with one's heart, to give oneself in giving it. Enjoyment is an ineluctable moment of sensibility" (OTB, 72). He was in search of a realm of ethics beyond the merely rational; a realm irreducible to knowing (OTB, 80). In doing so, he was also in search of an ethical basis for pluralism wherein the alterity of the other is upheld.

What is at stake here is an acceptance of radical pluralism and an ethics to support it. Any pluralism of merger is, thus, rejected; no convergence is intended. No cultural assimilation; no attempt at homogenization. We can ethically accept the other's difference from us. Levinas is not concerned about ethical principles and whether they are universal or particular. His concern rather is that ethics, whether universal or particular, arises from a primary relation, which is universal. If this relation were not there, there would have been no ethics. Hence, for Levinas, if there were only a single individual in the world, there would have been no ethics. But to say this is to misread Levinas, because he assumes Heidegger's *mitsein* and rejects Cartesian dualism, first of all, to start speaking of the ethical relation, which is not thrust upon the ego, but which is the ego's only possibility of existing. But here Heidegger's fundamental ontology is already ethical beforehand. Our fundamental goodness to let the other be other arises out of our sensual-spiritual nature. From the ego's subjectivity, desire, enjoyment and transcendence, in its incessant and frantic race to satiate the ego's hunger to fill itself, there is the other that ethically resists comprehension – the attempt to devour. Levinas locates the ethical in that experience of relation, which is older than selfishness. Failure to gauge, comprehend and, thus, murder the other's otherness, allows the letting be of that alterity. This is the prehistorical originary ethics before law, before commandments.

For Levinas, questions like 'why the other concerns me at all' arises from the supposition that "the ego is concerned only with itself, is only a concern for itself... But in the 'prehistory' of the ego posited for itself speaks a responsibility. The self is through and through a hostage, older than the ego, prior to principles" (OTB, 117). Levinas feared that the ontology of unity and merger was inherently violent. In a concrete historical sense, as we noted earlier, Levinas believed that the whole of western thought, right from Socrates and his predecessors down to Husserl and Heidegger, was an egology, the ontology of the ego. Further, that this was no mere aberration or accident but something that could directly lead to a cultural failure like the Holocaust. The trauma of experience is here searching for alternatives. If I am different from you, if my 'blue eyes' and 'dark skin' and 'homelessness' make me an absolute stranger to your familiar world, do I still have a chance to be with you and share your home and table and land? For Levinas, alterity is the world beyond the ego. He writes:

> The other is maintained and confirmed in his heterogeneity as soon as one calls upon him... The invoked is not what I comprehend: he is not under a category. He is the one to whom I speak – he has only a reference to himself; he has no quiddity (TI, 69).

The degree of the otherness of the other varies, but otherness still it is beyond the land of the ego. The letting be of this otherness, which is there already as the foundation of relation, is also the basis for pluralism – radical as it is. Levinas' is a philosophy of hope; its air is certainly spiritual. In his philosophical works, Levinas does not relinquish the Hebrew's messianic hope: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

5. The Question of Justice and Politics

Levinas is often criticized that in his completely other-centred philosophy, there is little room for the notions of justice and politics. In a society marked by radical pluralism, there is not only the face-to-face relation. There is the society at large; so, there arise questions of justice and the exigency of deciding who is in the wrong. Who is Levinas' other? It is the other person in my face-to-face relation, with whom I communicate in language. In fact, he calls the other, the face: "The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding *the idea of the other in me*, we here name face" (TI, 50). It is the concrete other, the neighbour. What about the others? This is an important question because pluralism is 'my' relating to the 'many' in incredibly complex ways.

Levinas rightly observes that these relations are asymmetrical and many times completely escape all our attempts to comprehend, order, and thematize them. If my responsibility for the other weighs me down to the extent described by Levinas, especially using expressions like 'substitution', how about my relating to an other, other than the face, the neighbour? Levinas does not avoid this question,[16] and calls the 'others other than the face' 'the third party'. For him, the face is itself the mirror of the third, the whole humanity. The universal neighbour, the poor, the stranger is already there in the concrete neighbour, the face that speaks: "The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other… the epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity" (TI, 213). Again, "It is my responsibility before a face looking at me as absolutely foreign… that constitutes the original fact of fraternity" (TI, 214). The religious air of Levinas' theory is clear here, because while saying that fraternity is not a "humanity united by resemblance" but still "involves the commonness of a father," Levinas asserts that "monotheism signifies this human kinship" (TI, 214). But don't we have a problem of over-generalization here? That is, if every other is a neighbour, to whom I am infinitely obliged, what happens when there is a question of who is in the wrong? How does the subject, weighed down by infinite responsibility, respond to that? From such an overburdening starting point of infinite responsibility, can we meaningfully speak of a concept of right and wrong in any way? How does justice realize itself?

For Levinas, 'letting the other be' is itself justice. "To 'let him be' the relationship of discourse is required; pure 'disclosure,' where he is proposed as a theme, does not respect him enough for that. *We call justice this face to face approach, in conversation*" (TI, 71). So, ethics is justice. The objective of TI is described as "the establishing of this primacy of the ethical, that is, of the relationship of man to man – signification, teaching, and justice – a primacy of an irreducible structure upon which all the other structures rest" (TI, 79). But we know that beyond the singularity of the one-to-one contact, there is the realm of distributive justice, the realm of wrongdoings and right-doings. Levinas writes: "If proximity ordered to me only the other alone, there would have not been any problem... The responsibility for the other ... is proximity. It is troubled and becomes a problem when a third party enters" (OTB, 157). The appearance of the third points to the limit of responsibility and brings up the question of justice, which is a matter of comparison, thought, consciousness, objectification, coexistence, thematization, intentionality and the intelligibility of a system. That is why Levinas says that, to certain extent, it is a betrayal of "my anarchic relationship with illeity" (OTB, 158). However, we need not rush to think that Levinas is against politics and the order of the state. His whole philosophy, it is true, is a critique of politics, as conceived by the west, which has led to war and violence, homicide and inhumanity. He, however, never questions the need for politics and justice; what he critiques is the assumption that politics needs to base itself all the time upon the same assumptions. He rather wants to found a politics that is based on infinite responsibility for the other. He writes: "Justice, society, the State and its institutions, exchanges and work are comprehensible out of proximity. This means that nothing is outside of the control of the responsibility of the one for the other" (OTB, 159). He believes that such a politics is required if the face that is completely different from mine is to be welcomed and extended hospitality.

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[16] Levinas deals specifically with the question of justice in both of his important works. See, for example, TI, 212-214 and OTB, 157-162.

> ... [J]ustice remains justice only, in a society where there is no distinction between those close and those far off, but in which there also remains the impossibility of passing by the closest. The equality of all is borne by my inequality, the surplus of my duties over my rights. The forgetting of self moves justice (OTB, 159).

Justice and politics based on the interests of the ego, its freedom and equality is bound to fail. He wants to show that political rationality alone is not a panacea for all modern ills. It alone is not the solution to all political problems. The ethics of responsibility for the other is and needs to be reclaimed as the foundation for politics. We now can see how, as a philosopher, Levinas gave himself the ambitious goal of showing the inconceivability of violence. This problematic is discussed vividly in the context of Europe in a 1984 essay, *Peace and Proximity.*[17]

Of course, Levinas shies away from saying anything more on the imperatives of justice, how to adjudicate between rival claims. However, this was never to be the order of inquiry of Levinas. His ethics is not one of rules and norms and laws. Hence, his critique of modern politics, based solely on political rationality, is not to busy in normative debates. For the critic, however, there is the genuine problem of engaging in ways to see how such a conception helps at the level of normative political theory. However, such attempts have not been altogether absent. Drawing from recent continental tradition, Michael Dillion, for example, speaks of 'another justice', which is to be contrasted with the normal calculative model of distributive justice. Dillion argues that occasionally 'another justice' "confounds our habitual modes of justice and challenges us to rethink, and find ways of readdressing, the injustice of which all modes of distributive justice are necessarily and integrally composed."[18] Would there be an exemplar case of such a challenge? Dillion points to the case of the refugee in the current international politics as a singular example where distributive justice fails and one needs to look for 'another justice'. We may note also that Levinas was not altogether outside the question of the distribution of justice. In fact, can a person be so if she/he were to participate in life in some way? Following the massacre of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatila by Phalangists in 1982, supposedly supported by Israeli defence forces, there was a radio dialogue with Levinas, in which Shlomo Malka asked him to definitively clarify if politics was not the very site of the encounter between the self and its other, and whether or not for the Israeli, the Palestinian the other in a fundamental sense. The reply of Levinas is seen by many as definitively political and by some as a blot on the philosopher of the other. He said:

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[17] Levinas, "Peace and Proximity," trans. Peter Atterton and Simon Critchley, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, 161-169.

> The other is the neighbour, who is not necessarily a kin, but who can be. And, in that sense, if you're for the other, you're for the neighbour. But if your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong.[19]

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[18] Michael Dillion, "Another Justice," *Political Theory* 27, 2 (1999), 168.

[19] Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics and Politics" in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand, London: Basil Blackwell, 1989, 294.

For us, however, this reply opens up the very difficulties of the ethics of responsibility when applied to a politics.[20] Of course, theoretically it also shows that there is no fixed other as such for any self.

We need to underline Levinas' suspicion of politics as such. He was sceptical of the possibility of good politics, based upon the primordial ethical sense of responsibility for the other. Moreover, he emphasized on the primacy of the ethical over the political. He writes in the preface to TI: "The art of foreseeing war and of winning it by every means – politics – is henceforth enjoined as the very exercise of reason. Politics is opposed to morality, as philosophy to naiveté" (TI, 21). While politics assumes reciprocity, ethics does not. Ethics is unconditional; politics is a limited sphere of operation. What Levinas hopes for is a politics founded upon an unconditional ethics. He writes:

> Metaphysics, or the relation with the other, is accomplished as service and as hospitality. In the measure that the face of the Other relates us with the third party, the metaphysical relation of the I with the Other moves into the form of the We, aspires to a State, institutions, laws, which are the source of universality. But politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and the other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus as in absentia. In welcoming the Other I welcome the One High to which my freedom is subordinated (TI, 300).

Radical doubts have been expressed by many admirers and critics of Levinas that attempting to work out anything practical from such a point is near to impossible. While Derrida calls TI "an immense treatise on hospitality" and recognizes that a question of radical politics like free asylum to refugees was always in the mind of Levinas, he acknowledges the difficulties in an essay written, commemorating Levinas' heritage on the occasion of the latter's first death anniversary.[21] For him, to shelter the foreigner in one's own land is a criterion of humanness.[22] Difficulties of a challenging moral conception need not make it impossible, need not make out to be 'too good to be true' and inordinately utopian. The transformative power of humanity is attested in its power to rethink the past, reconstruct the ways travelled and move forward.

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[20] For a thoroughly political reading of Levinas' works, see, Howard Caygill, *Levinas and the Political*, London: Routledge, 2002.

[21] Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Nass, Stanford, USA: Stanford University Press, 1999, 64.

[22] Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*, trans. Michael B. Smith, London: The Athlone Press, 1994, 98.

6. An Idealistic Pluralism

There is, thus, the question of religious ethics and all ethics with underpinnings of a religious ethos tending to be overtly idealistic. The same accusation is not applicable to, say, a conception like that of Rawls' theory of justice, which has a more practical aim of a contractarian base for a political system of cooperation. Levinas' ideal, on the other hand, seems to be aiming to create within the individual and the community, a notion of perpetual debt, guilt and inadequacy, rather than providing any practical guideline on the face of the problems of life. Its role is inspirational rather than prescriptive and normative. Levinas is, of course, aware of this predicament:

> *The infinity of responsibility denotes not its actual immensity, but a responsibility increasing in the measure that it is assumed*; duties become greater in the measure that they are accomplished. The better I accomplish my duty the fewer rights I have; the more I am just the more guilty I am (TI, 244).

Again: "It is as though I were responsible for his mortality, and guilty for surviving" (OTB, 91). However, its inspirational role is not denied: "... the plot proper to saying does indeed lead it to the said, to the putting together of structures which make possible justice and the 'I think'" (OTB, 46).

Levinas claims that the outline he provides is to be the foundation for any sorting out of the guidelines. But drawing guidelines is problematic because his notion is not itself bounded; it does not show its own limits, unlike the theory of Rawls. Hence, there is the possibility that responsibility itself is so trivialized that one does not need to be actually responsible at all, but what is important is one's intention of responsibility, one's predisposition. That is, one can be responsible without any act of responsibility. Perhaps, Levinas himself felt the pangs of his extreme teaching. The philosopher who demanded that we should not even look at the colour of the other's eyes, also made a few public statements betraying prejudice.[23] But the doctrine itself is clear. I am always 'a guilt' for everyone and this guilt is never finished and atoned for. "Thus, proximity is never close enough; as responsible, I am never finished with emptying myself of myself."[24] The idea here is so radical that Levinas says that without having done any wrong, the self is constantly under accusation and persecution (OTB, 114). However, how does Levinas explain his thesis of infinite responsibility? Probably, we need to go back to Sartre for a similar explanation of another idea, namely, freedom. For Sartre, either one is totally free or not at all. Similarly, for Levinas either one is responsible for everything and for everyone, or one has refused all responsibility. That is possibly the only answer to the criticism that to be responsible for everyone is to be responsible for none.[25]

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[23] See, for instance, Visker, "Is Ethics Fundamental?" 288.

While Levinas founds his theory of infinite responsibility on the subject, the subject here is inordinately weighed down by the other, say critics.[26] There seems to be an excess of the other. There is no place for the ego. The escape from being[27] is ultimately an escape into the other. Are there not dimensions of selfhood that resist absorption into the realm of intersubjectivity? For instance, there is grief that cannot be shared but has to be grieved and borne; such grief probably does not demand a response. In a self, exhausted by the other, there is no space for the private, the personal. Is pluralism, finally, an effacement of the self? If Heidegger and Sartre and political systems like that of Hitler narcissistically proclaimed a tyranny of the individual, especially the authentic one, is not Levians' alternative treads the other extreme – the tyranny of the other? Roland Paul Blum comments that Levinas' use of the nonsocial categories of one of his principal sources, Kikerkegaard, at the social plane leads to both the problem of the absence of reciprocity required for any intersubjective theory and the problem of disallowing the self its rightful privacy. Blum concludes that only a religious reading can make true sense of Levinas' notion of infinite responsibility.[28] However, we need to remind ourselves that Levinas' pluralism is inspirational and idealistic, evocative rather than argumentative. His philosophical project's aim is to constructively think beyond twentieth century's genocide and champion the Hebraic understanding of peace. OTB was dedicated to the closest among the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust and to "the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-Semitism" (OTB, dedication). His fundamental insight was to reclaim ethics as the foundation of philosophy and of human existence.

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[24] Levinas, "God and Philosophy," 169.

[25] Bernasconi, "What Is the Question to Which 'Substitution' Is the Answer?" 239.

[26] See Visker, "Is Ethics Fundamental?" 263-302 and Lingis, "Objectivity and of Justice," 395-407.

[27] See Emmanuel Levinas, *On Escape*, trans. Bettina Bergo, Stanford, USA: Stanford University Press, 2003.

[28] Blum, "Emmanuel Levinas' Theory of Commitment," 145-168.

7. Conclusion

Levinas' aim was never to provide an authentically practical guideline for pluralism. However, it can give us insights into a truly democratic ethos of pluralism. For us, the central pillar of Levinas' theory is a militant opposition to an assimilationist and convergence notion of pluralism. The 'melting pot' imagery, very often used for a supposedly multicultural democracy, is to be rejected and a pluralism that unconditionally tolerates multiplicities has to be accepted. Social labelling and blanket generalizations are attempts at murdering the irreducible other. All assimilationist ideas are inherently violent and conceal within them potent violence. Will the cultural communities, just as the many dissimilar others, exist as separate islands incapable of conversing in a common language of cooperation, while at the same time carrying for each other an infinite burden of responsibility for each other, requiring to tolerate all doings, right and wrong, of the other, just because it is the other's doings, because the other gets the priority of consideration? This is not the spirit of Levinas' writings. Upon the foundation of the burden of responsibility we carry for each other and for each other's otherness, we can practically work out a system of cooperation, rules governing it, civic injunctions, legal system, etc. But the foundation of society and the moral assumption of the individuals comprising it is the acceptance of the burden of responsibility for otherness. For us, at this point, Levinas is pleading for a fraternity rather than a citizenry; even if this be a nation, it is an ideal state of godly respect for each other. However, this is not a theocratic state of the faithful bonded to each other by a faith. It is a spiritualized democracy of fraternity. 'Integration' is to climax in such an authentic pluralism. Things 'different' integrate and disintegrate; things 'same' form an undisturbed identity. Hence, integration in a pluralistic context would not make differences disappear or let them merge into an undifferentiated unity. It ought to be an integration in spite of differences – an integration that embraces differences and accepts them in all goodness. Integration of such a genre resounds with the true import of the phrase 'unity in diversity'.

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HISTORY UNVEILS THE DIVISIVE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF RELIGION

Ignatius Jesudasan◆

1. Introduction

A land with a gigantic population and its connatural demographic diversity, which made India proud for ages as the home or cradle of many religions, seems a matter of both social shame and historical scandal that the same religions should lately be seen as a ground of national conflict and confrontation. The scandal seems more acute, when it is, at the same time, commonly mouthed that all religions are essentially the same, which is why they are categorized under *religion.*

What, then, is that common essence of religions, which makes them compete with one another? Perhaps such a search will help us either to vacate or, at least, to understand the source of the scandal as necessary to existential history if not also to logical rationality. If the divinity is affirmed as the common essence of religions and the source of their rivalry, such divinity would appear irrational, because its rational consequence would be that what is divinely destined should be accepted as inevitable, without regret, resistance or the least sense of scandal. Under this assumption, rivalry would appear as normal as like-particles repelling each other in nature. But, as such logic justifies the conscientiously unjustifiable existential rivalry, there seems to be something undesirably irrational about it. Hence, the problem remains and calls for not only an alternative solution, but also a socially more realistic explanation.

Perhaps the most obvious and plausible explanation is that a change of perception has come about or is being brought about in the assessment of social processes and the values embedded therein. It pragmatically results in national pride shifting from unity in ethno-cultural diversity to its reduction to religio-cultural uniformity. I wish to focus this article on the nature of this change in the value and social process perception, because it affects the substantive political attitude and behaviour pattern towards

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people of other ethno-religious communities. Since it makes people simplistically to project and believe religious diversity to be the source of the problem of emotive integration at the national level, we must take a closer look at the very processes, which go on under the name and form of religion.

2. Need to Re-examine Religious Processes and Values

We must subject to question even our assumption about the logical commonalty between religions as natural. In other words, is logic built on universal human nature or on the particularity of cultures? As applied to religions, it becomes a question whether any religion, in its origin, is a matter of natural or cultural evolution. Two sets of answers are given to this question from the side of the religions themselves.

Theistic ones, such as the Vedic and Semitic group of religions, which attribute divine inspiration to their foundational scriptures as well as their oral seers or literate prophets, consider themselves, on that score, as divinely *revealed religions* and, as such, to be both wholly infallible and unchangeable. In this fashion, they evade the question addressed to them, by claiming themselves to have been divinely placed beyond the purview of both nature and human-made cultures. At its face value, this evasive answer was intended as an act of implicit faith in an apolitically theological rationality. But deep down, as we shall try to show, through its societal workings, inspirational theology was the most shrewdly veiled linguistic game of political power. In other words, it was a religious hierarchy-constructing ideology of gender and political domination.

Its implication is that religion itself is out-and-out an ethno-political history-making secular reality. But it is not honest enough to admit this in plainly experiential literal prose. Instead, it subconsciously seeks mytho-poetical and metaphorical subterfuge in God so as to maintain the hierarchical system of rulers and their slaves or subordinates. The supernatural divinity is invoked so that rulers can at once exercise their power and hide that fact from the common knowledge of the ruled. Belief in the divinity behind the power of masters mystifies their unequal ruled mistakenly into assuming the hierarchically established social system into the rule or the kingdom of God.

3. Religion as Metaphorically Veiled Polity

Faith in the most diversely named divinity, thus, has been the most effective political strategy to ensure that the rulers' ideas become and remain the politically socializing ideas of the ruled. Religion, then, was the regulating idea under which the ruling classes could perpetuate their power over the masses. Hence, it must have been people with such world-ruling ambitions of power, who assumed and claimed for themselves the divine inspiration or revelation for the words, which they perhaps ecstatically conjured up with their oral or writing tools. However, they also covered up that ambition through their spontaneously put-on states of ecstasy. Yet their words were believed as true, because they reflected the analogy their authors had perceived between cosmic creation and their own intuitive grasp about it, which they creatively expressed in the metaphorically or multifariously meaningful scriptures of these religions. On that score, they even went so far as to deny any human authorship to their scriptures. Subjectively, that was their direct way of honouring God as the impersonally universal revealer of himself to all, who were open to acknowledging his inspiration and authority. But there was also an ideologically veiled intension in reducing the human authorship of the scriptures to unknown or unknowable anonymity. That cynically cunning intent was to make whoever cited or spoke in God's name as fearfully obeyed by their hearers, as if they were in the directly life-threatening presence of the incomprehensible Almighty. Theological faith, therefore, could be either as benign as its genuine mystics or as manipulative and manipulated as its unscrupulously institutionalizing power-mongers.

4. Illustrations with Ancient Indian Religions

It was, possibly, in a context of such socio-political exploitation by unscrupulous power-mongers in ancient Indian history that the Buddha and the Tirtankara Mahavira dared, at the risk of being branded as atheists, to challenge the divine inspiration of the Vedas by attributing every effect to its empirically verifiable natural or human causes. They were not ashamed to have the systems they had initiated, to be wholly associated with secular-human creativity within concrete socio-historically caused evolution. In not having recourse to anything more than human inspiration, the Jainas and the Buddhists were more transparently honest to the socially verifiable ethical response than the Vedic musically mystifying system of symbolic cult at the sacred spaces, mostly accompanied with lots of animal sacrifice.

The cumulative social effect was that, in spite of Vedic traditionalists despising the Buddha and the Mahavira as atheistic materialists, their socially convinced believers in religious India developed a cult of them among the more rationally-minded converts from popular and Vedic religion. At one time, the cult of the Buddha had got so widespread among the masses so much so that, in order to accommodate them into its fold, orthodox Vaishnavism went to the extent of declaring the Buddha one of the most human descents of the great Vishnu into India's politico-economic history. Belief in *avataras* was, perhaps, the finest instance within Indian cultural history, in the art of closing the gap between the religiously sacred and the politically secular. In shaping this theologically artistic contrivance, it came analogously close to Christianity.

5. Resistance to Missionary Religions

Even so, Hindus resent missionary religions, not to mention how much such religions are resentful among themselves because, in drawing their converts from among other native ethno-religious identities, they pose a threat of reduction in the demographic strength of the original ethnicities. Yet by breaking free from the practice of in-breeding endogamy, religious conversions introduce new blood and cultural exchange and enrichment through implicit or explicit exogamy. If Vedic Aryanism was resentful of missionary Buddhism and *ahimsa*-preaching Jainism, the Vedas themselves implicitly testify that it was due to that Vedic society being endogamous for racial purity as a strategy to propagate and perpetuate its own politico-military dominance through its hierarchical system of castes or *varnas*.

It should be less surprising that such a tradition resists conversion to more recent missionary religions of non-Indian origin than itself, such as Christianity and Islam. The resentment is due not only to the foreignness of these religions, but also to the historical fact that a new politico-military and economic hegemony followed in their wake. In the ideological use of scriptural inspiration for power, there was too much in common between them not to repel them politically from one another. Despite independent India's secular constitutional declarations, older historical phobias and new prejudices from perceived and on-going economic rivalries keep old fears alive. They project the past in such a way as a potential future possibility, that the religion of the realm could once again become the religion of the majority which comes into democratically elected power.

6. Christian Religious History

Even against such minority suppression-threatening potential of violent mass-power-based electoral politics, the incredible story of the birth and growth of Christianity stands as a convincing demonstration of just the contrary possibility. It is a Gandhi-like firm belief in the this-worldly power and wisdom of hate-free suffering, actively to resist, withstand and win over every force that sought to repress it. Gandhi himself learnt this lesson from the gospels-depicted life of Jesus. Therein Gandhi located the inspiring power in the gospel-narrated life rather than in the gospels' narrations themselves. Locating inspiration in a text and its author was to misdirect its capacity from making a love-filled history towards making a hierarchically built hate-and-power-motivated institution. For all that, Jesus himself had not denied the inspiration of his native Israelite scriptures. He had, rather, on the basis of the inspiration of those scriptures, claimed himself as the incarnate fulfilment of scriptural prophesies, while criticizing the priestly class's capitalization of the cultic offerings and sacrifices made in the temple. Consequently, he met with as ambiguous a fate as the Buddha, making devout believers as well as sworn enemies among his own people. Palestinian Judaism of his time was a far less tolerant and theocratically more authoritarian social system than its Vedic Indian counterpart. The latter treated contraries as complementary to each other. Dualistic Judaism treated contraries as incompatible and mutually exclusive contradictions. Hence, it paid the non-dualistic Jesus back with as great a violence as the heroic non-violence, which he had taught and advocated through his graceful words and exemplary life and actions.

After Jesus, his disciples also were branded as atheists for taking their cult of him to the Jewish and non-Jewish people worldwide as the incarnationally death-suffering and resurrected son of God. This new Christian theology replaced the much-feared God of the Israeli patriarchs with Jesus as the resurrected royal messianic son and successor to the long-since extinct kingdom of David. But in projecting him as returning to judge his murderers and the rest of the world, which had refused to accept him, neo-Christianity had probably re-assimilated into itself the whole of the vindictiveness of politico-religious power, which it had suffered from the Mosaic brand of the all-male Jewish theology.

7. God-axis or Human-axis

The prominently outstanding message, however, is that, though they span many such mystifying religious dogmas, the God-axis of both the Vedic and the Semitic religions was really the axis of their ambitious rulers' power over their believing masses. Many Semitic prophets and Vedic seers had effectively utilized it first for their own power by citing God's holy name as authoring or authorizing their own poetic compositions. Hence, all who were honoured through ethnic fan-culture as true prophets and seers will need to be revaluated, insofar as they were closed on or against other ethnic identities; likewise, the priests and kings, who had played the same game of exclusive ethnic power in the name of their group's divinity versus other ethnic groups. They had used the religious system of beliefs and ritual practices to gain and retain their positions of social power and prestige through prejudice and phobia towards other ethnic groups.

The disciples of Jesus too were originally ethnic nationalists, who had built and focused their messianic political ambitions around Jesus. Their own ethnic priests, however, had got those dreams frustrated through their collusion with the Roman governor of the Palestine province. The disciples could have thought of violently retaliating on this priestly class and the Roman power. But they were yet unequal to them. So, they wisely followed Jesus' teaching and example of non-violent endurance, while yet waiting patiently like their old patriarchs for the time when their prolonged hopes could be fulfilled at least in a generation of their distant descendants. They could even then greet and welcome it as the fulfilment of their long-cherished desire of earthly political power.

8. Conclusion

Within the purview of the analogy of the indigenous and exotic religions of India, covered in this brief survey, we might be warranted to draw the following inference. The 'Ram'-axis of the BJP and of the Hindutva forces in India today is no more an axis of pure religiosity, than the Christ- or the prophet-axis of the Christians and the Muslims has ever been, but of pragmatically symbolic power-political identities. Pure religiosity and spirituality exist nowhere today in any concretely visible, isolated form. It is as incarnately legitimizing ethno-political and economic interests and identities that religion and spirituality become concrete social sub-systems reinforcing the overall cultural superstructure. In a multi-ethno-religious and linguistic national scenario like India, no realistic politics can afford to exclude any ethnic segment and justice to it without jeopardizing the integrity of its federal constitution. Hence, a proportionate share in civil rights and responsibilities would seem to be the ideal way to include and integrate all segments into the national identity. Further, what is said about religions in India would apply correspondingly to the religions of the world at large.

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IN SEARCH OF A SOUL

Religion and National Integration

Thomas Padiyath[♦]

1. Introduction

It was said of Poland in a situation of division that the soul of Poland was in search of a body. Thinking about the current socio-religious and political scenario of India, I feel that the reverse is true that the body of 'Bharath Matha' is in search of her (lost) soul!

Two powerful institutions that determine the course of any country or, broadly put, the very course of world history, are religion and politics. Indian history is no exception to it. Perhaps India may be one of the rarest countries where we see this influence very much, although it is not the same as how religion and politics influence the destiny of her neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Nepal. The basic difference between the two is that while India generally maintains an open approach to religion and politics, in the neighbouring countries their influence assumed a more closed and univocal approach. In the history of modern India, both religion and politics, as two powerful institutions that determine peoples' life and destiny, were instruments of national integration and political achievements. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that, in recent decades, their influence, even in India, assumed a new perspective: what one sees is a sort of growing religious fundamentalism, a mixing up of religion and politics with hidden agendas and selfish motives. In this context, this article tries to draw on Sri Aurobindo's political thought to reconstruct a religio-political vision in view of Indian national integration.

2. Aurobindo and His Philosophical Vision

Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) can be considered the greatest among the Indian thinkers that India has produced after the classical period of Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and so on. He is a prolific writer and a seminal thinker, whose interests encompass all the areas that the human

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mind is interested in and carefully follows. Moreover, he is a world renowned Yogi, a poet-metaphysician, and a psychologist. In spite of his mystical philosophy, no one can deny his commitment to social philosophy and political thought. Aurobindo, in fact, is not just a political thinker but was a vibrant political activist. No historian of Indian nationalism can ignore his role in the freedom movement. He is also a great figure in the Indian renaissance movement. He is considered to have attained the "highest synthesis of the genius of Europe and the genius of Asia."[1] Further, he is "revered as the messiah of a new, inspired and fervent nationalism," who "preached the sanctification of patriotism as the dedicated worship of India personified as the Great Mother."[2] He, in fact, had the "moral courage to champion the creed of Absolute Swaraj for India as early as 1907."[3]

2.1. The Spiritual Absolute

A sound metaphysical backing is a *sine qua non* for the success of any scientific treatise or any systematic thought, for it necessarily demands a human response to life and reality, particularly a response to Spirit, Nature, and Human Being. It is equally applicable to one's socio-religious and political thought as well. On the other hand, it can be added that any metaphysics without a proper socio-political bearing is powerless and inadequate. What we see in Aurobindo is a careful blending of the above two aspects.

Aurobindo's metaphysics is deeply rooted in the Vedanta tradition. However, his merit is that he thoroughly reviews it and gives a contemporary and meaningful interpretation to the Vedic wisdom in the light of contemporary Eastern and Western philosophy. His fundamental assumption, in the light of Vedic Wisdom, is that the world is the manifestation of the Absolute. However, in contrast to some of the Vedanta schools which advocate a static and immutable self-existence, Aurobindo follows a dynamic understanding of the Absolute. This Absolute, *Saccidānanda*, is pure existence, pure consciousness, and pure bliss or *ānanda*. Everything in the universe is nothing but a manifestation of this dynamic and active consciousness. Matter, life, and mind and even time and space are taken to be the self-expression of this Spiritual Absolute.

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[1] Vishwanath Prasad Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1960, ix.

[2] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, ix-x.

[3] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, x.

Aurobindo recognises a double process in the Absolute, which he designates as involution and evolution. The involution or the descent of the Absolute is the condition for the evolution of the world. Thus, the world movement is a downward and upward movement of the Supreme Existence. In Aurobindo's own words, involution "is the manifestation from above of that which we have to develop from below; it is the descent of God into that divine birth of the human being into which we mortal creatures must climb…"[4] "Involution consists in the descent of the Infinite … into the cosmic world or reality through the medium of the Supermind. Evolution, on the other hand, is the reverse process of involution, and it consists in the ascent of the Spirit from matter through the medium of the Supermind back to its original nature."[5] These explain the core of the becoming of *Saccidānanda* and the evolution of the universe along with the great role of the Supermind. The law of involution is characterized as a "law of unity in multiplicity" where "the different beings that emerge from Brahman's Self-manifestation have their being and origin in the Divine."[6] Therefore, for Aurobindo, whatever takes place in the universe and human life is that which takes place in the plan and providence of God.

The self-manifestation of *Saccidānanda* takes place in a threefold movement of 'descent', 'emergence', and 'release'. In the first movement of the Spirit, it descends itself to the 'Inconscient'. The self-absorption of the Spirit in the Inconscient is to enjoy the self-delight in the finite variation. In the second move, the Spirit assumes the form or emerges into the triple world of Matter, Life, and Mind and this process culminates in the rational animal, human being. In the third and the final move, the Spirit releases itself from the limitations of spatio-temporal dimensions and realises itself as the One and Infinite. The realism of Aurobindo with regard to life and reality is only a corollary to his basic assumption that the world is a manifestation of the Absolute.

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[4] Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on Gita*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2000, 157.

[5] Amalraj Susai, *The Neo-Hindu Concept of Man in the Light of Sri Aurobindo's Evolutionary Vision*, Delhi: Intercultural Publication, 1993, 49.

[6] Susai, *The Neo-Hindu Concept of Man*, 50.

2.2. Illusionism versus Realism

Aurobindo could accept a philosophy of social and political change only because the world is real. What he aimed at was a "larger and complete affirmation" of both matter and spirit.[7] What he advocates is that we should give proper attention to the great Vedantic formulations such as "one without a second" and "all this is Brahman" (MU 2,7). He was critical of two views that were prevalent in India, namely the "refusal of the ascetic" or the Supra-cosmic view which accepts only the Supreme Reality as real and the "denial of the materialist" or the Cosmic-terrestrial view which corresponds to the pure materialism of the West. For Aurobindo, "the world is real precisely because it exists only in consciousness; for it is a conscious Energy, one with Being that creates it... [The] world lives by That; That does not live by the world."[8] Matter and Spirit are considered to be the lowest and highest terms of existence. Aurobindo's synthetic approach to matter and spirit explicates further his realism. For Aurobindo, creation has to be understood in the sense that the *Saccidānanda* "manifests what is in itself, in its own essence." One can speak of creation only in the sense of "Being becoming in form and movement what is already is in substance and status."[9]

> [T]he universe is real. If it does not reveal to us in its forms and powers the Reality that it is, if it seems only a persistent and yet changing movement in Space and Time, this must be not because it is unreal or because it is not at all That, but because it is a progressive self-expression, a manifestation, an evolving self-development of That in Time which our consciousness cannot yet see in its total or its essential significance.[10]

Philosophy, for Aurobindo, "shows the achievement of India at its height and this philosophy was not primarily dialectical metaphysical system building but represented the intellectual generalisation of profound cosmic experiences of life and the Spirit."[11] He repudiates the long standing allegation of Sankarites that the world is unreal or mere illusion. If the world is unreal and a mere illusion all claims and suggestions with regard to political change and transformation become meaningless.

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[7] Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, 24.
[8] Aurobindo. *The Life Divine*, 22.
[9] Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, 333.
[10] Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, 464-65.
[11] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 71.

Aurobindo, on the basis of his own fundamental principle that the world is the manifestation of the Absolute, advocates the true reality of the phenomenal world.[12]

2.3. Spiritual Determinism

Aurobindo advocates a kind of spiritual determinism in history. For him, history is the fulfilment of God. It can be observed that Aurobindo's political thought is structured on three foundations, namely, (1) the dynamic *Saccidānanda*, (2) Supermind, the Creative principle of *Saccidānanda*, and (3) the Evolutionary ascent of the created universe. As already stated, the evolutionary ascent of the created universe depends on the involutionary decent of the Absolute.[13] Aurobindo claims that this Omnipresent Being or Existence "fulfils itself in the world and the individual and the group with an impartial regard for all as equal powers of its self-manifestation."[14] In *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Aurobindo argues that to recognise an "inevitable will in nature" is a mark and sign of political wisdom.[15] Those who are familiar with the western philosophy may trace a Hegelian influence too in the spiritual dialectics of Aurobindo. However, it has to be said that for those who are rooted in the Upaniṣadic/Advaita philosophy, the notion of the spiritual dialectics is not something novel, for it is an original idea of the Vedanta philosophy itself. Aurobindo conceives history as the revelation and manifestation of the Spirit. "The history of the cycles of man is a progress towards the unveiling of the Godhead in the soul and life of humanity; each high event and stage of it is a divine manifestation."[16] The sociological and political implication of the faith in a spiritual Absolute as the sole reality was manifested in the Eastern culture in and through the sentiments of solidarity, unity and mutuality, something which is absent in the predominant secular culture.[17]

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[12] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 31-33. Varma gives a detailed description of the refutation of Illusionism by Aurobindo.

[13] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 33.

[14] Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle: The Psychology of Social Development*, Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1999, 7.

[15] Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1999, 353.

[16] Cited in *Sri Aurobindo Mandira Annual*, 1942, 172-73.

[17] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 65.

Aurobindo maintains that the Western culture characterised by mechanistic and secularistic overtones and marked by "imperialism, materialism and rationalistic science" could not crush Indian culture in spite of various invasions because "in India there is a spiritual link and continuity with the most ancient Vedic traditions which emphasized the realization of the values of freedom, bliss and immortality. Because of the inexhaustible resources of the Spirit, the soul of India was not crushed in spite of the ravages of numerous foreign hordes and invaders."[18]

2.4. Aurobindo's Philosophy of History

Aurobindo's philosophy of history is characterised by a fundamental causal motivation of historical events. This causal motivation in history, for Aurobindo, is the manifestation of the Spirit in the created universe and reciprocally the realisation of the Absolute by the created world through an evolutionary ascent. Therefore, whatever takes place in the created universe happens in the eternal Wisdom of the Absolute. It can be observed that Aurobindo applied his spiritual philosophy of history mainly in four areas of Indian life, namely, intellectual culture, politics, society, and art. The claim of Aurobindo is not only that the Indian culture and intellectual life manifest "the spiritual soul of India" but also that the trend dominated by the spiritual impulse has led India to "great and powerful creative accomplishments." Since Aurobindo recognises in philosophy of history a cosmic manifestation of the dynamics of the Transcendental Absolute, the construction of proper political and social aims and objectives are only a necessary condition for the historical realization of this world movement. This is also the rationale behind Aurobindo's critique of the world negating philosophies, such as some forms of Vedantism and Buddhism. What Aurobindo advocates is a fullness of social and individual living which should be manifested in a dynamic human existence, leading to the establishment of the gnostic community, something yet to be realised.

3. Contemporary Challenges to Indian Nationalism

India has achieved marvellous and envious growth in various spheres of life in recent decades. She shows steady economic growth; she has significant achievements in science and technology; in international politics and relationship, people await her voice; she is the largest democratic country in the world; so goes, briefly, the list of her achievements. However, she faces various threats both from external and internal forces. Externally, she is a victim of international terrorism. However, I would say that her greatest threat is from her own sons and daughters, such as growing religious fundamentalism, communal violence, mistaken secularism, challenged minorities, etc.

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[18] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 66.

3.1. Religious Fundamentalism

The greatest threat that India faces today is the growing fundamentalism of a religious nature. As India celebrated 60th anniversary of its independence, in one of the interviews, Khushwant Singh was asked the question as to what worries him the most? The reply was short and clear: "the growing religious fundamentalism."[19] Indeed, religious fundamentalism is what threatens India the most. What has become more dangerous is that it has assumed a more devilish face when the politicians mixed religion and politics with clear political agendas. The fundamentalists and their activities received a new turn ever since the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. One could list a number of cases of the same sort after this tragic event. The Hindutva movement led by the Sangh Parivar epitomizes the most dangerous form of religious fundamentalism that the independent India has ever seen.

3.2. Hindutva and Hinduism in the Name of Nationalism

One of the often cited phraseologies in India's socio-political scenario is 'Hindutva', which literally means 'the quality of being Hindu'.[20] But it is difficult to define it properly. One cannot define but can only try to describe what it is. The votaries of Hindutva are generally classified as "the promoters of a narrowly Hindu view of Indian civilization..."[21] It is argued that Hindutva is "an ideology of reaction and conservatism, thrown up today against the chaotic threats to dominant groups... [It] articulates religious meanings and emotions that live in everyday social power relations... Moreover, it is conceived as "the populist ideology of India's religious right."[22] According to V. D. Savarkar, the progenitor of the concept, Hindutva "is so varied and so rich, so powerful and so subtle, so elusive and yet so vivid" that it defies all attempts at analysis. Describing its relationship to Hinduism he stated: "Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva." For him, the "failure to distinguish between Hindutva and Hinduism has given rise to much misunderstanding and mutual suspicion between some of those sister communities that have inherited this inestimable and common treasure of our Hindu civilization… Hindutva embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole being of our Hindu race."[23] The essentials of Hindutva, according to Savarkar, are a common nation, a common race, and a common civilization. The Hindutva movement has entered another stage when the Hindu ideologues such as M. S. Golwalker elaborated this idea to exclude all non-Hindus from the ambit of the nation. Thus, it can be safely said that "Hindutva serves as an ideological justification for the construction of India as a Hindu nation."[24]

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[19] *The Week* (Independence Day Special), August 19, 2007, 82.

[20] Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2005, 51.

[21] Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, ix-x.

[22] David Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu*, Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 1997, 22-23.

3.3. Cultural Nationalism

What the Hindu ideologues represent today in the light of Hindutva movement is a cultural nationalism, where we have the primordial emphasis of religion and culture over politics. The attempt of these ideologues is to foist a new ideology on Hindus. However, this move envisions a false representation of the nature of national identity.[25] In fact, their attempt is to give a new interpretation to culture for their own political advantage. For them, "culture is but a product of our all-comprehensive religion, a part of its body and not indistinguishable from it." This would naturally imply an identification of national culture with Hindu religious culture. K. N. Panikkar observes that in this respect, cultural nationalism embodies "a euphemism invoked in order to mask the creation of a state with Hindu religious identity." This goal of the Hindutva people was very well expressed by Golwalkar: "In Hindustan, the land of the Hindus, lives and should live the Hindu nation... Consequently, only those movements are truly 'national' as aim at re-building, revitalising, and emancipating from the present stupor, the Hindu Nation."[26]

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[23] V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu* (An Ideological Pamphlet Published in 1923).

[24] K. N. Panikkar, "In the Name of Nationalism," *Frontline*, March 26, 2004, 5.

[25] Panikkar, "In the Name of Nationalism," 5.

[26] Golwalkar, *Hindu Rashtra*, 1939, 43-44, cited in Panikkar, "In the Name of Nationalism," 7.

The new project of 'cultural nationalism' encoded in the slogan "nationalise and spiritualise" has a twofold objective: (1) to retrieve and disseminate the cultural tradition of the golden Hindu past, and (2) to eliminate all accretions that had become part of the heritage.[27] Only in this light one can see the education policy adumbrated by the BJP-led government. The censorship of history books by National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was part of Hindutva education project. It is observed that 'the objectionable' portions were at odds with Hindutva's brahminical version of history which glorifies India's past, and presents it as a series of Hindu achievements. By this what is aimed at is the elimination of ideas of pluralism and tolerance from Indian culture. Precisely, the Hindutva advocates want to rewrite Indian history for their advantage erasing the age-old cultural tradition of India, which advocated a pluralistic, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious character. In this regard, Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate, writes: "it is futile to try to understand Indian art, literature, music, food or politics without seeing the extensive interactions across barriers of religious communities. These include, Hindus and Muslims, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Parsees, Christians ... Jews, and even atheists and agnostics..."[28]

The politics of Hindutva is promoted by a "family of Hindu political organizations" such as (1) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the official political arm of the Sangh Parivar, (2) Sangh Parivar, led by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which supplies the ideological backup as well as the functional activities in the promotion of Hindutva, (3) Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) or the World Council of Hindus, committed not primarily to religion but to religious politics, (4) Sewa Bharti, dedicated to welfare programmes linked with Hindutva movement, and (5) the Bajrang Dal, the violently energetic youth wing of VHP, which has been accused both by the International Human Rights Watch and by the Indian Human Rights Commission, for their involvement in Gujarat riots in 2002.[29] There are a number new political and religious organizations which support Hindutva ideology, namely, Sri Rama Sena, Lingayat religious teachers in north Karnataka, and religious heads such as the Tejawar Swami in the District of Dakshina Kannada, etc.[30]

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[27] Panikkar, "In the Name of Nationalism," 8.

[28] Amartya Sen and Colleen Taylor, *Food Culture in India*, Amazon, 2004, xvii; also see Praful Bidwai, "Hindutva Ire," *Frontline*, December 21, 2001, 112-114, 112.

[29] Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, 52.

3.4. Communal Violence

One can only count the growing number of communal violence in different parts of the country as part of the fundamentalist agenda. In fact, communal violence has become a world phenomenon. Communalism is generally described as "collective antagonism organized around religious, linguistic, and/or ethnic identities."[31] It is observed that "since the late 1970s, nationalist movements based on the assertion that one majority ethnic or religious group defines a nation have emerged with new force and creativity – with new rituals and spectacles, including televised violence..."[32] Some other western media occasionally cover the news with the title, "Holy War in India."[33] India has been a victim of communal violence ever since the partition. However, in the recent decades its mode, nature, and number have drastically changed. It is noted that the communal violence in Gujarat and Orissa were masterminded by political motives and is counted as part of the political project of the Sangh Parivar. After Gujarat and Orissa, now a southern state Karnataka has become the new laboratory of Hindutva experiments and communal violence. What is more alarming is the great support these communal extremist elements receive from the political leaders and the ineffectiveness and the self-imposed silence of the security personnel at the face of extreme violence.

The first incident that triggered communal violence in the country, in recent decades that saw the impact of politics of religion, was the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, on December 6, 1992, by the *Kar Sevaks*. The West sees it as a prototype of the world conflict: they see "Ayodhya as a window on a world of conflict that developed inside nationalism...,"[34] which helps see the incidents that followed in India and around the world. David Ludden gives the following version of the incident which also points to the intricacies involved in it:

> Holy men declared Sunday, December 6, 1992, auspicious, and more than 300,000 people gathered that day in Ayodhya... At midday, a vanguard among them broke down police barricades around a

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[30] Vikhar Ahmed Sayeed, "Divide and Rule," *Frontline*, June 20, 2008, 13-15.

[31] Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu*, 12.

[32] Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu*, 2.

[33] Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu*, 3.

[34] Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu*, 1-2.

> mosque called the Babri Masjid built in 1528... Cheering men swarmed the domes of the old Mosque and in five hours they hammered and axed it to the ground... Hindu leaders who had mobilized for this event since 1984 watched with satisfaction... The construction of new Rama temple was begun that evening... Supporters justify the action at Ayodhya as the liberation of a Hindu sacred space to unify the Indian nation. Critics call it violence against Muslims; they decry such communalism ... as an attack on Indian civil society.[35]

Some trace the roots of the 1993 Bombay blasts, the 2002 Gujarat riots, and the Akshardham temple siege the same year, to this unfortunate event.[36] Moreover, the Godhra train carnage, in which fifty-nine people, majority of them Hindu *Kar Sevaks*, were charred to death on February 27, 2002, allegedly by a Muslim mob. This was followed by one of the worst communal riots in the history of Independent India which claimed more than 1000 lives. The next was State of Orissa. Here the communal violence broke out following the murder of Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati and four of his disciples on August 23, 2008. The communal violence that followed saw a focused attack on Christians and claimed about 30 lives and thousands were made homeless. The country saw last of the communal violence in the state of Karnataka where many of the Christian churches were targeted and other minority groups were attacked. Many connect the rise of the BJP into power and the increase of violence in the state. It seems that the Hindutva movement has seen a fertile land in the State. The Sangh Parivar leaders have recently claimed that they would turn the 'Bababudangiri shrine', dedicated to the Sufi saint and located in the hills of the Chickmangalur district, into the Ayodhya of the South. What is alarmingly clear is that India is becoming a slave to certain ideologies which very often threaten its secular nature and communal harmony. It is observed that "ideology often becomes blinkers and makes its believer ignore complex realities and hence she/he becomes victim of her/his own ideological beliefs... Ideology always creates certain simplistic beliefs and divides the world in black and white ignoring all in between shades."[37]

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[35] Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu*, 1.

[36] *The Week*, August 19, 2007, 30.

[37] Asghar Ali Engineer, "Jinnah: Secular or Communal," *Indian Currents*, 3 July 2005, 14-15.

3.5. Mistaken Secularism

What we have already described with regard to growing fundamentalism, communalism, etc., amounts finally to endanger national integration by a mistaken understanding of its secular nature. The preamble of Indian Constitution states that the people of India have solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic... Article 25 affirms the Right to Freedom of Religion, i.e., with regard to "Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion ... [A]ll persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience, and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion." Delineating the fundamental duties of every citizen, the Constitution, Article 51, division 5, vows to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic, regional, or sectional diversities..."[38] However, what the Hindutva ideologues advocate and practise, what the progenitors of communalism envision and those who threaten religious freedom in the country are acting just counter to the spirit of Indian Constitution. What is at stake is the secular character of India. Moreover, these ideologues try to give a mistaken interpretation to Indian secularism. For example, Ganesh Yaji, media-in-charge of the BJP in Karnataka, in spite of his direct connection and link to Hindutva ideologists, recently stated: "The BJP is the most secular party in the State and it has grown in the State because of its struggles and agitations for the people and continued efforts to improve its organization at the grassroots."[39]

Another instance of a 'mistaken secularism' is the State of Kerala, which has the highest literacy rate within the country. The ruling government led by the Marxist Party, known for its atheistic and anti-religious propaganda, is trying to give a 'secular face' to the party and government policies while trying to implement their anti-religious agenda through the educational reform and textbook revision. It seems that the party leaders are trying to interpret Indian secularism as if it means 'having no religion'.

What went wrong is that in the name of mistaken secularism we refuse to listen to the pregnant and vital messages imparted by various sacred scriptures which "teach inner purification of our life and thereby aim to sanctify the structure even of the social and historical universe."[40] The beauty of Indian nationalism was its openness towards plurality of religion, culture, language, race, or creed. The identity of being Indian cannot be and should not be restricted to any particular collectivity.[41] India has assumed a secular identity or a pluralistic identity, epitomizing the sense of openness to all religions and cultures.

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[38] Binay Chakrabarti, *The Constitution and Constitutional Law of India*, Calcutta: New Central Book Agency, 1988.

[39] Sayeed, "Divide and Rule," 15.

3.6. Minority Rights Challenged

The Constitution of India gives adequate space to ensure rights of the minorities, especially their religious freedom and freedom to run educational institutions. However, growing fundamentalism and communal violence threaten these rights of the minorities. When the majoritarian movement led by the Hindus try to define Indian nation on the basis of an 'imposed' univocal culture and "seeks to displace and remove alternative, pluralistic definitions"[42] and understanding even the very existence of religious minorities such as Muslims and Christians are at stake. They are even strategically branded as 'foreigners' by some of the fundamentalist groups. The majoritarian movement, in its attempt to define national identity on the basis of a very restricted understanding of a religious identity, reduces Indian identity to an exclusive religio-cultural identity. The identity of any nation should take into account perspectives of history, anthropology, political science, art, literature, religious diversity, cultural diversity, etc. Moreover, when an exclusive cultural or religious identity becomes the defining mark of a national identity, there is always the danger of religious fanaticism, and even the threat of reducing it to a theocracy. With regard to the protection of minorities, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in *Young India*, on May 15, 1930:

> The history of India and of the many countries of Europe has demonstrated that there can be no stable equilibrium in any country so long as an attempt is made to crush a minority or force it to conform to the ways of the majority... Therefore, we in India must make it clear to all that our policy is based on granting this freedom to the minorities and that under no circumstance will any coercion or repression of them be tolerated... We can also lay down, as our

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[40] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 123.

[41] M. V. Nadkarni, A. S. Seetharamu, and Abdul Aziz, eds., *India: The Emerging Challenges*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991, 354.

[42] Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu*, 14.

> deliberate policy, that there shall be no unfair treatment of any minority.[43]

One of the distinctive features of Indian identity was its pluriform nature in culture and religion. What is suggested is a comprehensive catholicity towards other religions and cultures. The majority's approach towards the other should not adapt itself to a Hegelian 'self-mediating culture' which is marked by a 'totalizing wholeness' in which the voice of the other is muffled down. The danger of Hegelian self-mediation is that "it risks reducing the plurality of forms of mediation to one essential form that encompasses the others." Here all otherness is reduced into "putative primacy of the self-mediation." What is advisable is that the dialectical self-mediation should be open to intermediation between thought and what is other to thought, precisely the other as other.[44] The minority communities in India are worried about their future in India as well as the future of communal harmony in India. Joseph Powathil expresses his concern and dismay in this regard as follows:

> Our nation currently is passing through a phase of absolutist and fascist trends. A virulent section of the majority community is giving orders, rather warning, to the minorities to restructure their community as per their diktats. They are asking the Church leaders and believers to '*Indianise*' their religions and to disassociate with their legitimate authorities. What they are aiming at is a monolithic structure and culture, which is fundamentally against the chief trait of India's culture – unity in diversity. The main victims of these absolutist ideas are the minority communities. The fabric of democracy is so thin that it cannot withstand even a small attack from any corner. It is the duty of the minorities to be ever vigilant against the covert attempts of a few to capture or cancel their constitutional rights. A liberal democracy would succeed only when the minorities are safe from the dominance of the majority.[45]

In a multi-cultural and multi-religious situation, more than mere tolerance what is needed is openness towards the other. Whereas tolerance bears with it a sort of superiority, openness includes an attitude of reverence as well.[46] Aurobindo maintains that "uniformity is not a real but a dead unity: uniformity kills life while real unity, if well founded, becomes vigorous and fruitful by a rich energy of variation."[47] In this context, it is fitting to quote Sardar Patel, who tabling the report of the Advisory Committee in the Constituent Assembly on May 25, 1949, said: "Our general approach to the whole problem of the minorities is that the state should be so run that they should stop feeling oppressed by the mere fact that they are minorities and that, on the contrary, they should feel that they have as honourable a part to play in the national life as any other section of the community."[48] Unless one learns to respect and honour the other as other, it will be very difficult to be mindful of the individuality of the other.

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[43] Cited in the forthcoming book of Joseph Powathil, *Journey with the Church.*

[44] William Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990, 4-5.

[45] Powathil, *Journey with the Church.*

4. Religion and National Integration

After having seen the foundations and the distinctive nature of Aurobindo's socio-political philosophy in the first part, we focused, in the second part, on the contemporary socio-political situation of India. In the light of what we have already seen, this section aims at articulating what Aurobindo could offer to the contemporary India, with his integral approach to life and reality centred on a religious metaphysics. In fact, it is hoped that such an integral path would enable us to find a viable means to solve the current socio-political and religious enigma that threatens Indian national integration.

4.1. Aurobindo's Understanding of Religion

It is unfortunate to see that some sympathizers of Hindutva movement, in view of appropriating a cultural tradition for their political gain, interpret even Aurobindo for their advantage. What I have in mind is the move of the Hindutva people who make India's renaissance leaders to be the icons of Hindu nationalism. In reality, they were charismatic advocates of a universal religion, based on the unity of humankind.[49] Therefore, it is deemed necessary first to see how Aurobindo perceived religion and its role in socio-political life. For Aurobindo, "Religion is the seeking after the spiritual..."[50] In another place, Aurobindo describes religion as "that instinct, idea, activity, discipline in man which aims directly at the Divine...”[51] What is highlighted in these descriptions is the intimate relation between religion and transcendence: in the first, reference is to “spiritual and the supramental” and, in the second, it “aims directly at the Divine” or the Transcendent. Religion as the seeking after the spiritual raises further questions concerning the meaning of what is spiritual. By the spiritual Aurobindo means that which is supra-rational, that which is beyond or higher than the realm of reason. Without advocating fideism, Aurobindo informs us of the dangers of someone following the decrees of religion without thinking. In fact, he records well the past atrocities that have taken place in history in the name of religion and faith.[52]

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[46] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 121.

[47] Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1998; 4th ed., 436.

[48] Cited in the forthcoming book of Powathil, *Journey with the Church*.

[49] Panikkar, "In the Name of Nationalism," 8.

[50] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 127.

A question as to the legitimacy of the complimentarity of the religious and the philosophical is quite natural. For the East, the complimentarity of the two is not illegitimate. The argument is that while philosophy supplies the theoretical part by providing authentic knowledge of the ultimate Reality, Yoga, the practical or the religious part provides the means to attain the realisation of the ultimate Reality. In other words, “philosophy discovers the final end or goal of man; having discovered it, it hands it over to Yoga that it may devise means of practically realizing it.” In the Indian tradition, from the point of personal realization, religion is nothing but Yoga.[53]

4.2. Religion and Freedom

For Aurobindo, the synthetic approach towards philosophy and religion is intimately connected to true spirituality and freedom. For, true spirituality itself is an outcome of the enjoyment of true freedom. True freedom finds its deepest manifestation in its power to expand itself and grow towards perfection by the law of one’s own nature, dharma. His argument is that true spirituality respects the freedom of the soul that is not just confined to the walls of any particular creed or sect; nor is it confined to any particular dimension of human existence. True spirituality is open to philosophy and science, and this liberty extends even to the point of freedom to deny the spirit. Aurobindo maintains that it was this freedom, which different religions enjoyed in ancient India, which is being questioned today by the fundamentalists.[54]

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[51] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 162.

[52] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 165.

[53] S. K. Maitra, *The Meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1956, 14.

According to Aurobindo the religious instinct in man is the "one instinct … that cannot be killed; it only changes its form."[55] Nevertheless, he maintains that true religious spirit demands a sound philosophical and theological basis. For him, "a religion that is not the expression of philosophic truth degenerates into superstition and obscurantism, and a philosophy which does not dynamise itself with the religious spirit is a barren light, for it cannot get itself practised."[56] However, religion itself has to be very vigilant that it does not cross the boundary of its own domain. Thus, Aurobindo warns even those who are religious:

> We see too that a narrow religious spirit often oppresses and impoverishes the joy and beauty of life, either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans attempted it, because they could not see that religious austerity is not the whole of religion, though it may be an important side of it, is not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindliness are also and even more divine, and they forgot or never knew that God is love and beauty as well as purity.[57]

Aurobindo does not hesitate to affirm that religion does not stand for a "false theocracy, forgetting that true theocracy is the kingdom of God in man." For him, true religion should be "a seeking after God, the cult of spirituality, the opening of the deepest life of the soul to the indwelling Godhead, the eternal Omnipresence."[58]

4.3. Religion versus Religionism

Aurobindo maintains that the 'Soul of India is spirituality'. India could withstand the foreign invasion only because of its spiritual thrust.[59] In contrast to the western culture, characterised predominantly by a materialistic culture, "there is a dominant notion of the spiritual transcendental infinite." What is more relevant in our present discussion is the sociological implications of this spiritual thrust, namely, "the stress in Indian and Eastern culture on the sentiments of solidarity, unity, and mutuality of all beings in the spirit."[60] The Asiatic culture and civilizations could prevail because it was well-founded on a moral and religious framework which was also foundational to construct a socio-political order. This religious sense, sweetened and made tolerable by a strong communal feeling, made possible a living humanity generous in human equality and closeness.

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[54] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 170.

[55] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 163.

[56] *Arya*, August 15, 1915, cited in S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967, 578.

[57] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 165.

[58] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 166.

[59] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 66.

What India lacks today is this true religious sense. We mistake religionism for true religion. Aurobindo is critical of the former. What he advocates is a religion of the Spirit. He makes a distinction between true religion and religionism.

> True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man... Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system.[61]

While religionism focuses on "credal ceremonialities," true religion "brings down the powers of God, to transform mankind, to profess equality of all human beings."[62] No true religious person can agree with what the Hindu *Kar Sevaks* have done in Ayodhya. They fought a "holy war" in the name of religion and God. Certainly, they have mistaken religionism and religious fundamentalism for true religion.

Every religion is characterised by code, creed, and cult; they constitute the body and mind of religion. Unless members of religion rise above all these to the soul of religion, they will not live true religion. Only the 'soul of religion' will take one to the eternal values such as truth, love, peace, service, etc., where different religions are not competitors but complimenting companions, where religion itself as a concept is a living tradition perpetually open to creative transformation. Then we would become true advocates of the 'religion of the Spirit' something for which Aurobindo firmly stood. Socio-political structuring in the ancient India, according to him, was characterised by a free and synthetic communal order which aimed not at individual liberty, but communal freedom. In fact, only a religion which advocates true communal freedom can contribute toward national integration in the context of growing fundamentalism, communalism, and sectarianism.

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[60] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 65.

[61] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 166-67.

[62] Aurobindo, *Human Cycle*, 220.

4.4. Religion and National Integration: A Religion of Humanity

It is true that in the contemporary culture religion is retreating to the inner world. Aurobindo, however, believed in the greater power and potentiality of religion for social transformation and national integration. What can be articulated from his works, as a viable means to overcome the contemporary socio-political crisis and in view of proposing religion as a means for national integration, is the need for a Religion of Humanity. It is an undeniable fact that he was deeply rooted in the Vedic tradition and has well appreciated the Hindu culture and tradition. He, however, never attached himself to the exclusive views of any specific historical religion or a monolithic culture or tradition.[63] He proposed a scheme of political unity and national integrity based on the idealistic-religious metaphysics.

For Aurobindo, human egoism is the principal cause of all kinds of discord, be they religious, cultural, national, or international. Therefore, this egoism has to be replaced by love and universal brotherhood. Only a religion of humanity can achieve this end. It would mean "the clear recognition by man in all his thoughts and life of a single soul in humanity of which each man and each people is an incarnation and soul form."[64] The religion of humanity has to be more powerful than the nationalist creed advocated by some religions of the country.

India has never been in her history a victim of religio-political polarization than today. Even the 'holy men and women' and military officers are victims of this polarization (recent incidents substantiate this claim). What is advisable is the reconstruction of our socio-political structure in the light of religious ideals. Aurobindo believes that only a religion of humanity can supply the moral power for such a reconstruction.

I am reminded of S. Radhakrishnan speaking in 1942 on the topic "religion and politics" in Calcutta. He proposes that we have to leave behind all kinds of provincialism and cultivate true nationalism, as nationalism is not a natural instinct.

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[63] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 263.

[64] Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, 360, cited in Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 259.

> Nationalism is not a natural instinct. It is an acquired artificial emotion. Love of one's native soil [and] loyalty to regional traditions do not mean violent hostility to one's neighbours. If today the feeling of national pride is intense, it only shows the prodigious capacity of human nature for self-deception.[65]

Aurobindo is fully aware of the moral ambivalence of religion today. We need solitary and contemplative individuals intoxicated by the spirit of true religion so that religion and religious can be sources of socio-political transformation.

5. Conclusion

In the present context of Indian political and religious scenario Aurobindo's emphasis on moral purification for political action is very significant.[66] Nevertheless, the major difficulty in this regard is to determine the right relation between political process and religious values. Moreover, for too many people their national identity and loyalty are being overshadowed by narrower perspectives of communal and religious identity and loyalty. However, in this context, a separation of the two will not be the ideal, rather "the proper integration between a higher religious perspective and a politics devoted to the welfare of all."[67] Then religion will attain the very ideal it represents: religion – its Latin root *religare* means to relate, tie up, or bind together.

However, to achieve this noble cause one has to transcend egoistic mentalities and sectarian ideologies. A communal religion should give way to a rational religion or, as Aurobindo suggests, ordinary religion should be transformed into a religion of humanity. Only rational religions can be agents of such transformation that nurtures the fermentation of the ideals of civilization such as truth, beauty, adventure, art, peace, etc. In fact, what Aurobindo aims at is a spiritual transmutation of human powers. It is a task and responsibility that each one has to fulfil by translating the classical Vedic invocation into a reality:

Asato ma sad gamaya
Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya
Mrtyo ma amrtam gamaya
Om Śanti! Śanti! Śanti!

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[65] S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1947, 14.

[66] Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, xi.

[67] Paulos M. Gregorios, *Religion and Dialogue*, Kottayam: Mar Gregorios Foundation, 2000, 94.

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IDEOLOGICAL PREFERENCES VERSUS NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF INDIA

Aparna Vincent◆

India is not only diverse in its geographical features, lifestyles of its people and visible symbols, but also in terms of innumerable ideologies and philosophies that have originated in this nation from time immemorial. It can be said that India lives in the minds of its people rather than in its physical boundaries and these varied minds gave birth to a lot of contradictory ideologies and philosophies. When every ideology originated, it had to go through various phases of criticism and, in turn, some other ideologies originated to counter the same. It was the attitude of tolerance that the Indian society showed towards each new trend of thought that made this nation think more and produce more. It is that spirit of tolerance which produced great scholars and philosophers of this country. Tolerance of diversity is hailed as the biggest virtue of India. But as the years go by, a major question arises as to whether India is losing her spirit of unity and tolerance in an era in which she needs to safeguard this spirit with utmost intensity and care? If the answer to this question is 'yes', then India is in terrible danger and her future is quite bleak. This problem becomes graver, especially as India is striving towards its goal of being a developed nation and aspires to be the world leader very soon. To attain development in any area and to offer international leadership, national cohesion and internal integrity are indeed essential.

The problem of intolerance occurs because of the irrational radical elements of the society which strives to eliminate every other ideology and philosophy in the society other than the one that they stand for. The ways they adopt for this purpose are more powerful and dangerous than the enormous contradictory ideologies and philosophies that successive generations of this country had produced. These radical elements succumbing to fundamentalist tendencies undertake mythical constructions to substantiate their ideologies, glorification of ideology, manipulative writings to establish one ideology as a heavenly truth, etc., to establish their exclusive claims that they and only they are true. These activities have dangerous implications for our society. Each activity aimed at

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glorification of one ideology and outright rejection of all others takes a subversive turn, leading to subsequent problems adversely affecting the integrated spirit of its people on which this nation survived for hundreds of years; for, projecting one ideology as the exclusive 'heavenly' truth limits the possibilities of further discourses and arguments.

It is a fact that all human societies are influenced by some kind of myths. Especially in the context of nation states, myths tend to assume central importance. Myths concern us not only for the part that they played in primitive, illiterate, tribal or non-urban cultures – making them one of the main objects of anthropological interest – but also because of human enduring insistence on carrying quasi-mythical modes of thought, expression and communication into a supposedly scientific age.[1]

History is most often used as tool to create and substantiate a myth. Because it is considered that past is the most efficient standard to measure the quality of present day arrangements in society – be it social, political, economic, or cultural – in spite of the fact that modern day societies are relatively different from those of the past. It helps legitimizing the present in connection with the past. For centuries, history was generally accepted as a morally exemplary tale, a feature of nation's identity and values that were of political worth.[2] When associated with history, myths assume greater importance and esteem. History which is a record of unique events in the life of humankind is the stir and vibration of life and it performs the function of not only conserving and understanding of what has happened in the past, but is also a completion of what has been going on at present.[3] History, it must be said, is more often misused and abused rather than being properly used.[4] Creation of myths can be cited as an important example of abuse or misuse of history.

Influence of myths is seen prominently in the societal or national level rather than at the personal level. A national myth is an inspiring narrative or anecdote about a nation's past. Such myths often serve as important national symbols and affirm a set of national values. National myths can also be explained as ideas which get generated on a superfluous

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[1] G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

[2] Jeremy Black and Donald M. MacRaild, *Studying History*, New Delhi: Macmillan 2000; Michael Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

[3] B. Sheik Ali, *History: Its Theory and Method*, New Delhi: Macmillan, 1981.

[4] N. Jayapalan, *Historiography*, New Delhi: Atlantic, 2002.

or shaky basis. It may be a legend or fictionalised narrative, which has been elevated to serious mythological, symbolical, and esteemed levels. Every country has its own versions of heroic history, interpreted to suit the spirit of the nation or, apparently, certain needs of one or other segment of the population in a given historical context.[5] National myths usually revolve around their people's struggle for independence or their war against colonialism and, in some other places, they may be spiritual in their nature and may refer to mythological stories of nation being founded directly or indirectly by gods or rulers who are entrusted with the task of governing the state on a divine authority.

Myths differ according to their purpose such as, social, political or economical. In monarchical systems, many a time the leader may be given a mythical supernatural life history in order to make him or her supra powerful. Legitimising the absolute power of the state and state sponsored propaganda are the functions of myths within a totalitarian regime. In liberal regimes, they can serve the purpose of inspiring civic virtue or self sacrifice, or publicising the power of the dominant groups and legitimising their rule. In short, it can be said that the primary motive behind a mythical creation and its propaganda is legitimising. In such mythical writings, in spite of the discontinuities of the present, society claims to have continuity with the past. The reason for this activity being the reverence to the past, it is continued despite the technological developments that have happened in the world. Vested interests that are aware of this character of society create myths with the help of the past and use it to their own advantage with the intention of legitimising their power or achieving their goals. Adolf Hitler, for example, successfully constructed the myth of Aryan supremacy, using history as a tool and employed it for legitimizing his idea of a world Germanic empire. In Nazi Germany, history was utilised as a tool of social control, as an attempt to sharpen the masculine, heroic history of the fatherland and of the German *Volk*, evil cede in the propaganda of Joseph Goebbels, one of Hitler's henchmen.[6] The past is an inheritance that we all share, but its interpretation varies as to how it is viewed in terms of political and social utility.[7]

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[5] Black and MacRaild, *Studying History*, 8.

[5] Freeden, *Ideology*.

[6] Black and MacRaild, *Studying History*, 11.

[7] Black and MacRaild, *Studying History*, 10.

[7] Freeden, *Ideology*.

Especially in a multicultural entity like India, a myth assumes greater importance. The process of national integration is most often influenced by myths, for which its creators resort to actions such as over-dramatizing of events, omitting important historical details or adding facts for which there is no proof or which cannot be substantiated with the support of scientific or historical data. These kind of unwarranted actions give rise to a lot of problems in writing of the past as well as in the society, which may not be properly equipped to distinguish between what reality is and what myth is.

There is a set of widely ranging but connected problems concerning myths.[8] History indicates that national myths time and again hinder the process of national integration. It disallows a society or a nation to acknowledge the discontinuities of the present in relation to the past.

In fact, in India, for example, we find history being misused by political parties to serve their vested interests.[9] When the Congress party led UPA government put forward a proposal for Sethusamudram shipping canal project linking Indian waters with that of Sri Lanka, it was met with stiff opposition from different quarters including political parties and politically aligned religious groups within the country. The argument of the opposing parties was that, in the course of realizing this project, it would result in the destruction of a bridge believed to have been constructed by Lord Rama. The Archaeological Survey of India, however, initially stated that there is no scientific evidence to prove the existence of either Lord Rama or a bridge constructed by him. The central government of India filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court to the same effect. The advantage of the project realization is said to be a cost effective mode of transport. That is, when Sethusamudram is in place, ships sailing from the west to the east coast of India will no more need to circumnavigate around Sri Lanka. The substantial benefits will accrue to the national and regional economy.[10] All these arguments, however, were not enough to satisfy the Hindutva hardliners opposing the project, with BJP leading them from the front, with its interest in the vote bank of the Hindu majority.

The Congress Party led UPA does not want to stall the project and upset its coalition partner from Tamil Nadu, Dravida Munnertra Kazhagham (DMK), which entertains high hopes on the political gains from the project. Meanwhile, the BJP and its extremist allies want to sensationalize the issue and arouse religious and communal feelings in order to make gains in the upcoming parliamentary general elections. In the question related to the existence of the mythological deity, Lord Rama, and the bridge believed by many to have been constructed by him, scientific investigation and human rationality take a backseat. It is interesting to note that this is happening in a country whose Constitution lays insists on developing scientific temper as one of the fundamental duties of its citizens.[11]

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[8] Kirk, *Myth*, 2.

[9] Jayapalan, *Historiography*.

[10] www.sethusamudram.gov.in

It is naïve, for example, simply to see history as an accumulation of facts and figures, or as a series of colourful little stories which enliven human knowledge. Instead political suppositions have played a major role in their development.[12] Indeed, political parties, if they win their case, have a lot to gain from this kind of myths. History is used to legitimize these myths, as "the past has considerable political leverage."[13] The Interpretation of a myth is based on its political and social utility in a particular place or period.

The creators and perpetrators of myths go any extent to protect and perpetuate their myth, as legitimacy of their idea as well as their sustenance, many a time, depends entirely on that particular myth to which they adamantly adhere themselves. Once in the realm of myth making, we perhaps approach an ideological treatment of the past.[14] History as an activity of creating myths, on the one hand, might lead to the construction of 'heroic histories' of certain individuals or groups of a society and, on the other, may completely ignore the existence of certain weaker sections and deny their fundamental rights.

Myths are, in fact, used to make the ideologies of the dominant class of a society appear as the interests of all. Under the influence of ideology, many twisted and manipulated accounts of past are produced which are, in turn, used to legitimize the claims of vested interests of powerful parties. Politicians and leaders in any country have a vested interest in the past.[15] Whether driven by a self serving or narcissistic desire to connect themselves, it is to glorify their predecessors in high office, or to revive and mould the national spirit to their advantage.[16] The Hindutva ideologists of India have espoused the taboo of cow slaughter as a national issue and they insist on legislations to include cow protection as one of the fundamental rights of Indian Constitution. In order to give apparent authenticity to their claim, some of the Hindutva ideologues created a myth that beef eating in India started with foreign domination, i.e., the Muslims started it and the Europeans continued it. Here, they completely negate the possibility of historical developments to have occurred in any other manner. This myth, however, is strongly contradicted by some historians who disprove it with substantial evidence. According to them, much before the advent of Islam, beef had been associated with Indian culinary practices and contrary to popular belief even today a large number of Indians, the indigenous people in particular and other communities in general, consume beef unmindful of the threats from the forces of Hindutva ideology. It must also be state at this juncture that these historians had to face a lot of opposition, including threat to life, primarily from the Hindu extremist groups.

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[11] *Constitution of India*, Article 51 a.

[12] Black and MacRaild, *Studying* History, 10.

[13] Black and MacRaild, *Studying History*, 10.

[14] Black and MacRaild, *Studying History*, 11.

[15] Black and MacRaild, *Studying History*, 12.

The insistence of ban on cow slaughter is a typical case of politicizing religious issues. Here the Hindutva ideology manipulates and creates confusion between the image of cow being a religious symbol for the Hindus and the image of cow being a symbol of national identity. The Hindutva ideology tends to provoke communal feelings and religious sentiments among people belonging to one particular religious affinity and mobilize them for their own political gains. While the religious sentiments of a community have to be respected, considering culinary diets of society as a symbol of national identity doesn't seem to be very encouraging. Maybe it is high time that we do a rethinking about what we consider as a nation: What is India as a nation? Does the lifestyle dictated by a particular ideology prevalent within the society determine its spirit of nationalism? Or, is it their spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood that makes a nation strong?

Ideologies attempt to control the world of politics and force us into a rut of indoctrination and manipulative conduct.[17] Ideology based on conservative nationalism is also a hindrance to the intellectual growth of our nation. It affects the thought process of a society and the freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by the Indian Constitution as a fundamental right.[18] The communalist forces of Hindutva ideology, for example, put forward an illogical line of reasoning to oppose M. F. Hussain's painting depicting 'Bharat Mata' as a nude woman. Neither the motivation behind the painting nor its complexities was taken into consideration. The explanations given by the artist were neglected without giving him a fair chance to defend his artistic work. The opposition to the painting was so strong that the artist had to face a threat to his life and had, unfortunately, to live in exile in another country. A case was also filed against him in the court of law, but the court acquitted him of all the charges.

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[16] Black and MacRaild, *Studying History*, 12.

[17] Freeden, *Ideology*.

When a fundamental right is denied, citizens feel alienated from the nation. One will not have an intense feeling of belonging towards one's nation. This, in turn, affects the national unity and various processes culminating in national integration. This kind of conservative (and destructive) nationalism arises in the mind of people who put forward themselves as the guardians of a nation's culture. They decide what 'culture' is to a nation based on their own ideology and set their own standards to determine as to what actions amount to causing disgrace to this 'national culture'. It is indeed chauvinistic to insist on the understanding that one ideology determines the culture of a nation. The followers of a particular ideology do not realize (although sometimes it happens with their knowledge also) that ideologies are neither right nor wrong, but only a wide ranging structural arrangement that attributes meaning to a range of mutually defining political concepts.[19] Considering and promoting one single ideology as the only true one is a fairy-tale-way of understanding with no amount of rationality involved.

No ideology can be regarded as an irrefutable truth as it exists along with a number of parallel ideologies and, therefore, it cannot be forcefully imposed on an individual, a nation, or the society at large. If a general citizen is not aware of the problems of ideology in a society, he or she will not be able to understand the ideological manipulation of reality behind various events. Thus, he or she will not be able to take an unbiased stand regarding the events that are happening in the society. Many will end up losing their own individuality as the perpetrators of ideology interpret the events to the intellectually unequipped citizens based on their own ideology and claim that their interpretation is an absolute truth which cannot be challenged, no matter how much of evidence can be brought against their particular argument. Citizens with good intellectual capacity, equipped by their own individuality and effective reasoning capacity, are an asset to the nation-building process and amalgamation of different ideas for successfully building up a spirit of unity among the citizens of nation. Unwillingness to accept the presence of different ideas and inability to tolerate them will lead to the collapse of national unity.

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[18] *Constitution of India*, "Right to Freedom," Part III, Article 19.

[19] Freeden, *Ideology*.

Thinkers and writers are usually the perpetrators of ideologies. They legitimize their own preferred ideology by making use of history. They create a number of national myths and glorious narratives on the basis of their preferred ideologies. Later, these biased narratives enter educational curriculum and mainstream academic thinking. Individual writers misuse history to serve their needs and interests.[20] They distort history because of fear, bias and opportunism.[21] The hold of an idea can solely depend on the ability of the writer to substantiate his writing. Kancha Ilaiah, a Dalit professor at Osmania University, in his work *Why I Am Not a Hindu?* launches a scathing, blatant criticism of Hindu religion and calls the religion as being fascist. He terms the original Aryan settlers as responsible for the mass extermination of Dalit bahiyans. According to him, in Hinduism, "All gods and goddesses are institutionalized, modified and contextualized in a most brazen anti dalitbahujan mode."[22] He goes to the extent of saying that Hindu religion deliberately uses violence as a control mechanism against the Dalits. Here the author is expressing ideological bias against the Hindu religion and in favour of the Dalits. Kancha Ilaiah's attack on Hinduism is based on his beliefs and experiences without any scientific evidence to support his argument. Certain features of the Hindu religion have been manipulated in order to serve the purpose of legitimizing his ideology, which has been presented as heavenly truths without any scope of being subjected to the prospect of analysis and scrutiny. In this book, a religion per se is termed as the reason for oppression of Dalits without giving much importance to the social and economic reasons behind this oppression. His call to 'Dalitize India'[23] in response to the demand of upper class Hindus to 'Hinduize India'[24] is equally dangerous. He further says: "We must shout, we hate Hinduism, we hate Brahmanism, we love our culture and more than anything we love ourselves."[25] The feeling of 'belonging to India' becomes less important to Kancha Ilaiah when compared to the feeling of 'being a Dalit'. He says: "If the Brahminvaada represents the ideal for them [for the Hindus], the Dalitvaada should be the ideal for us [for the Dalits]."[26] While he criticizes the Hindu religion of being extremist and fanatic, he is also committing the same mistake of refusing to accept the presence of different voices in our Indian society. He ultimately turns one group of our society against another and encourages the same level of extremism, only the parties are different. How would such a stand enhance our national unity and integrity?

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[20] Jayapalan, *Historiography.*

[21] Jayapalan, *Historiography.*

[22] Kancha Ilaiah, *Why I Am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy*, Calcutta: Samya, 1996, 72.

[23] Ilaiah, *Why I Am Not a Hindu*, 132.

Independence was expected to make India more developed and liberal in various areas such as political, social, economical, cultural, and educational. In terms of tolerance of different ideas are we progressing or digressing? There is increased presence of extremism in Indian society. Once again, it is in the same minds in which this nation lives and remains in the lime light; this time, however, as we witness inability to accept the presence of differences and discontinuities in our society, it is the duty of every Indian citizen to protect the integrity of our country which was acquired by the sacrifices of many a great minds. If India were to attain freedom from all external forces, first of all it needs to be freed from its own radical and communalist elements which are holding her fast to slavish but fundamentalist tendencies. It is, then, necessary to exercise a sense of caution while expressing one's own ideas and also while looking at and interpreting others. This prudence will help us strengthen the social fabric, harmony, and brotherhood in our society and will make India a country living the dictum "unity in diversity" in its true sense.

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[24] Ilaiah, *Why I Am Not a Hindu*, 132.
[25] Ilaiah, *Why I Am Not a Hindu*, 132.
[26] Ilaiah, *Why I Am Not a Hindu*, 132.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Mathew Chandrankunnel, ***Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics, Quantum Holism to Cosmic Holism: The Physics and Metaphysics of Bohm***, New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2008, pages: xix + 405, ISBN: 81-8220-258-2.

I came to know of David Bohm and his work when I read his book *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. Reading of this book led me to Hegel's dialectics, then, to Jalaluddin Rumi, whom I consider as the father of dialectical philosophy. Rumi could discover through dialectics that we see colours because of the light emitted by the coloured substances. This seeming simple explanation also implies that different colours are due to change in the nature of emitted light from the substances which are coloured. After Rumi, Newton made this amply clear. We know that the nature of light is changed by a change in the wavelength of emitted light. Wave theory of light marked the beginning of quantum theory by observation of Max Planck on blackbody radiation. I narrate this sequence of events to make it clear that thoughts alone are enough some times for discovering things and entities previously unthought-of and unheard-of by anyone of us. Thus, a whole body of theoretical physics is a thought process confirmed by modern experiments. Quantum mechanics, thus, no longer belongs to some abstract thoughts of physicists but to hardcore reality of this terra firma of ours. Experiments have strengthened our beliefs in the reality of quantum mechanics. Rumi proposed the theory of colour and Newton confirmed it when he showed white light consists of seven colours by simple experiments. Dialectics can discover something not so obvious as was done by Rumi before Newton. Rumi did proceed further from things not so obvious to an entity not at all seen, i.e., God. Rumi said hidden things are made manifest by their opposites and God has no opposite and, hence, is not seen by us, the ordinary mortals.

The points I have raised in the preceding section have relevance because the author of the book is a theologian himself, a theoretical physicist and a philosopher. These attributes of Mathew Chandrankunnel make this book highly readable. Students of philosophy and physics can understand it, so do other laymen with elementary knowledge of physics. The philosophy of implicate order is made clear by the author in the first section of the book. Take a look at the concluding paragraph of this section, which deals with Bohm's implicate order: "The implicate order is

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the integration of these various ideas into single concepts. It is a concept about reality in totality, encompassing all."

The book has an interesting discussion on the Von Neumann's impossibility theorem which, stated in simple terms, was a denial of causality not only in quantum mechanics but also in the entire realm of science and the macro world. The section mentions Heisenberg who submitted a paper to Max Born in which the usual mathematical commutability rule of the real world would not apply to quantum mechanics. For the real world 'a x b' = 'b x a', but not so for the micro world of quantum mechanics. Max Born later proved that the imaginary number $\sqrt{-1}$ does not exist in the macro world of day-to-day experience but for the micro world it does exist in reality. These observations have been given in explanatory notes for the references of section 2. The section that follows it beautifully explains causality and it has the following components: (1) causation, denoting the connection or nexus between cause and effect, (2) principle of causality the law generalized from the particular experiences of the cause-effect nexus, and (3) doctrines of causality: the universal principle of causality called determinism.

The above tenets of causality which were denied by Von Neumann now form the basis of modern science of the macro world. This brings us to the question of why the macro world is predictable and deterministic while the micro world is unpredictable, indeterminate, and probabilistic. The section 2 is appropriately named as "The Foundational Problems in Quantum Mechanics." This duality between the micro world and the macro world is resolved by Bohm. Quantum reality can be interpreted as the Bohmian causal quantum ontology.

The final and most interesting section of the book deals with cosmic holism and Bohmian metaphysics. In addition, the book has interesting material personally collected from the wife of Bohm by the author. Bohm's intellectual development and his interaction with Jiddu Krishnamurthy are succinctly described in the book. The book at the philosophical level represents an interesting intellectual development which points to the pre-eminence of philosophy over science. However, the dichotomy between the micro quantum world and the macro world of day-to-day experience is far from resolved. The debate still rages on; for example, in the book, *The Emperor's New Mind*, by Roger Penrose, holds that there could have been continuity from the micro world of quantum mechanics to the macro world of classical mechanics, but the gap between the two is gaping enough for one to wonder. The indeterminate micro world and determinate macro world are far apart and what lies in between is the world of human mind which is conscious enough to contemplate on both. But, according to Bohm, there is no such discontinuity or gap between the two worlds. It is one world, one vision of holomovement.

Nayeem Khan

Rudolf C. Heredia, *Changing Gods: Rethinking Conversion in India*, New Delhi; Penguin, 2007, pages: xii + 386, ISBN: 0–14 –310190-0.

This book discusses issues pertaining to religion in the context of conversion, a delicate and unsettled issue in India ever since the nationalist Hindu political elements have become active. The book maintains that religious conversion is an unavoidable stumbling block for any aspiration for religious harmony.

Changing Gods contains eight chapters, which discuss different viewpoints on religious conversion. It tells us that religious conversion never happens in abstraction. Conversion is always mediated by other persons, social institutions, and group or community interactions. This book gives a brief summary of the crusades, medieval conflicts, and many other conflicts which broke out in India in the context of religious practices. Different viewpoints, especially from different historians, add to the value of the theme developed in this book. For example, wounding memories of the partition have brought into perspective from different viewpoints. Discussion over tectonic fault-line between the two perspectives of a liberal secular nationalism and a fundamentalist religious point of view are placed side by side in order to give a better grasp of the realities. Moreover, the author explains how religion may also function as a political ideology rather than a spiritual faith. Author cites the example of Hinduism which has of late tended to the emphatic assertion of Hindutva at the cost of the fundamental perspectives of Hindu faith and the original religious perspectives.

Different fundamentalisms, such as economic fundamentalism, political fundamentalism, and religious fundamentalism, are also brought to focus in this book. It proposes a separation of politics from religion in order to build a modern nation the dynamics of which will not be adversely affected by the push and pull of manipulated religious sentiments. Different opinion of famous personalities such as Ambedkar, M. K. Gandhi, Ramabai, and Nivedita are brought to focus in this book.

Ambedkar and Gandhi were sensitive to issue of gender justice and equality. The kind of incisive feminist critique that Ramabai offers could come only from women. The aggressive Hinduism of Nivedita represents another kind of assertion by women.

According to the author, at psycho-social level conversion is a question of personal choice and change is the result of a personal quest. Positively, this is experienced as liberation and, negatively, it could be an escape. Conversion of Goutama Buddha, St. Paul, and St. Augustine are discussed as classical examples. However, the author also critically explores the problems related to Dalit frustration and Tribal aspirations in India, especially in the context of alleged forced religious conversions. It is interesting to note that the murder of Graham Staines and his two young sons is discussed in the context of Tribal conversion.

This book figures out conversion as a process, but not an event; these processes are discussed through the example of Jews, Kabir, Gurunank, the early Christian churches, etc. Conversion as a process necessarily implies change. Positively perceived, the author opines, change would mean personal betterment or community progress.

Finally, this book proposes 'religious disarmament' in order to enable people live in peace and the state functions for the common good. The first step will attempt to clear some open space on the controversial theme of faith and reason. Faith and reason must both be included in a more comprehensive understanding. In the given context of India, we must cope with multiple identities and accept a radical new hybridization. For this, we must first map the new social landscape of India. Finally, the book proposes that for the sake of public order and communal harmony religious leaders must come to an agreement to tread lightly in this arena of religious conversions. A cultural disbarment is the only way to peace. Indeed, the author has taken enormous work to brig out this book and the critical scrutiny of the hotly debated phenomenon of religious conversion in the context of India must be appreciated. It is a very useful resource to know what is happening in India in the name of conversion and I am sure that it would serve as a good resource book on the continued debate on conversion, which, as it stands now within the political landscape of India, will continue for quite some time.

Rijo Jose Ikkan

J. Kuruvachira, *Roots of Hindutva: A Critical Study of Hindu Fundamentalism and Nationalism*, Delhi: Media House, 2005, Pages 365; ISBN: 81-7495-202-0.

J. Kuruvachira is a senior lecturer in Philosophy of Religion, Phenomenology of Religion and Indian Culture at the Salesian College of Higher Education, Dimapur, Nagaland. He has published a study on the religious philosophy of Ninian Smart, *Religious Experience: Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu*. His area of special interest is contemporary religious fundamentalism.

In the post-independent political and socio-cultural life of India, there is perhaps no other ideology as debated, challenged and studied as Hindutva, and during the last twenty years or so we have witnessed a phenomenal growth in this area of research. Hindutva is already a phenomenon that encompasses practically all diverse components of Indian life and has cast its spell over a sizeable portion of the Indian masses. It assumed the form of a new movement in the country. In fact, anyone familiar with the current events in India knows that the Hindutva canopy has spread itself in almost every important strata of Indian life: in the Parliament, several State legislatures and governments, local administrative bodies, government agencies and NGO's, mass media and social communication, universities, centres of higher education, research and training, etc.

Unfortunately, the response of many people in India to this controversial and dangerous ideology is feeble. There are also persons in India who are either indifferent or complacent about the danger which Hindutva poses to Indian civilization. However, those who carefully study the ideology are unanimous in admitting that Hindutva is perhaps the most destructive ideology which independent India has ever encountered. In many respects, it is similar to the European Fascism – especially Nazism – of the last century. As an ideology, Hindutva is a synonym for Hindu cultural nationalism which in essence is aggressive, militant, fundamentalist, and anti-other and is opposed to secularism, democracy, and cultural pluralism. The ideology has succeeded in brainwashing many passive Hindus, both in India and abroad, to be aggressive in the name of Hindu religion. It has also become an instrument in the hands of the powerful upper class Hindu elite to realize their political ambitions. Today, the proponents of Hindutva are engaged in making this ideology the catalyst for winning the support of the Indian masses in order to create a Hindu *Rashtra* (Hindu nation) out of India, founded solely on a monolithic Hindu culture.

This book is an exposition of the fundamental characteristics and the historical roots of Hindutva and a critical analysis of the same based on original sources. It will be helpful to those who are interested to know what Hindutva is, its fundamentalist and nationalist overtones, how the Hindu religion is being exploited for political ends, and the impact of all these on the Indian psyche. There is a widespread tendency among many in India to confuse Hindutva with Hinduism. Attempts are frequently made by certain Hindutva ideologues and organizations to substitute Hindu religion with Hindutva and vice versa. However, informed persons know that the two are distinct worldviews that differ sharply in their contents, methods of functioning, and goals. Hinduism is spirituality a noble way of life for self-realization with clearly enunciated moral principles and mode of conduct. Hindutva, on the other hand, is a fundamentalist, narrow-minded, nationalist ideology with dubious ethics both in its objectives and in its method of functioning.

Sinto P. Parecattil

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PLURALITY AND UNITY WITHIN INTRARELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

Keith D'Souza◆

1. Introduction

The plural nature of intrareligious discourse and its normative strategies help to preserve as well as set limits to the plurality we experience in our existential situations. By 'intrareligious' I mean the discourse prevalent *within* any given religious tradition, though much of my argumentation could usefully be extrapolated to the field of interreligious discourse as well, i.e., the discourse *between* persons and communities of different religious traditions. By 'discourse' I mean communication comprising of a specific concern, context, orientation, and terminology. The term 'discourse' in this study includes not only the cognitive dimensions of religious language, but also affective, existential, practical, and social dimensions of religious communication in general.[1]

This article is divided into four parts. The first is *descriptive* or phenomenological, in which I outline various types of religious discourse prevalent within religious traditions. The purpose of this descriptive approach with regard to different discourses within the domain of religion is to heighten awareness with regard to a prevalent diversity within religious discourse in general. The second and the third parts are *normative*, in which I argue for the validity of both the sustenance of plurality and the limits to such a plurality when it engenders alienation and violence. In the second part, I highlight the major reasons supporting the value of plurality within religious discourse. I argue that plurality or diversity is not a limitation or threat to be overcome but a phenomenon to

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[1] For a succinct overview of the different definitions and interpretations of the term 'discourse' in a variety of disciplines within the liberal arts, see Sara Mills, *Discourse*, London: Routledge, 2007. The problem with defining the term 'discourse', as Mills points out, is that the term "cannot be pinned down to one meaning, since it has had a complex history and it is used in a range of different ways by different theorists, and sometimes even by the same theorist" (5-6).

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be treasured in terms of the development of the tradition itself. In the third part, I outline limits to plurality when it is in danger of fragmenting the unity of intrareligious, interreligious, and social discourse in general. Whenever one or more discourses within a religious tradition is in danger of jeopardizing the common good, these discourses need to be challenged by recourse to more universal, rational, and moral considerations. The fourth part is *strategic* or methodological, in which I lay the groundwork for the sustenance of both plurality and unity via the discourse form of intrareligious dialogue. Firstly, believers engaging in different discourses within the same tradition have a lot to learn from and contribute to one another's development. Secondly, dialogue with one another is sometimes necessary in order to challenge violent interpretations of a religious tradition, not only for the sake of the tradition in question, but also for the larger social good.

2. Plurality of Intrareligious Discourse

Religious discourse is characterized by immense variety, not only when one compares one religion with other religions, but even within any given religion itself. Among the world religions, one may perceive a discursive affinity between religions which arise from similar geo-social circumstances. For example, the Middle Eastern religions (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) share elements such as prophecy, divine transcendence, and the importance given to authoritatively revealed texts. The Eastern religions, in contrast (Hinduism and Jainism in India, Buddhism in India and the Far East, and Confucianism and Taoism in China), give more importance to mysticism, divine immanence, and an orally communicated revelatory tradition. Thus, it is that many scholars pay attention to two fundamentally paradigmatic religious discourses, viz., the prophetic and the mystical, as broadly representative of the Middle Eastern and the Eastern (South Asian and Far Eastern) pathways towards the sacred.[2] At the level of philosophical and theological scholarship, these may, indeed, appear to be the two most fundamental or dominant forms of religious discourse. However, what seems to be more characteristic of belief at the folk level are 'cultic', 'ecstatic', and a whole host of alternative discourses, features of which I will now highlight.[3]

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[2] See, for example, David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990. See also Chapter Six, "Between Jerusalem and Benares: The Coming Contestation of Religions," of Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, London: Collins, 1980, wherein Berger contrasts two distinct types of religious experience: "*confrontation with the divine*" and "*interiority of the divine*" (168, original italics).

In an earlier article, I had systematically described a wide variety of forms of religious experience and expression.[4] What I will now outline is the core concern and orientation of each of these forms of experience and expression (which I subsume under the category of 'discourse'). Each of these forms of discourse is a conscious or subconscious attempt to reduce religion to its most significant elements, as interpreted by the agents who share and propagate the discourse in question. *Cultic* discourse is characterised by faithfulness towards liturgical or paraliturgical ritualistic practices. Regularity and propriety of ritual and sacramental form are given importance in this discourse. *Moral* discourse is focused on the cultivation of righteous lifestyles and life options. The impact of religious values on the practical sphere – and the correspondence between these two realms – is given greater importance. *Ecstatic* discourse values personal religious conversion and spontaneous forms of prayer. Spiritual authenticity based on a personal and joyful relationship with the divine is given a premium. *Cosmic* discourse is oriented towards a harmonious relationship with the elements and processes of nature. A symbiotic relationship with the earth based on a spiritual worldview is the operative disposition in this case. *Ascetic* discourse values renunciation and discipline. Accordingly, simplicity of lifestyle, or a renunciation of family ties, or an abandonment of personal career goals – or a combination of these and other forms of renunciation – are willingly embraced. *Prophetic* discourse is driven towards interpersonal and structural change. Challenging unjust systems and relationships on the basis of spiritual and moral principles is given greater priority. *Mystic* discourse underscores the primacy of unitive experiences. Overcoming a psycho-spiritual alienation with the 'other' – especially with the divine – in its various forms is the primary goal. *Pluralistic* discourse values dialogue and mutual influencing. Learning from, and contributing to the development of other religious traditions is considered an important contemporary spiritual pathway. *Harmonic* discourse is focused on personal growth and self-actualization. Discernment, meditation, and different forms of psycho-physical practices towards personal wellbeing are some of the pathways adopted.

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[3] For example, Shankara's Advaita Vedanta is often considered to be a representative of Indian philosophy and religion in the West, while, in fact, there are numerous schools of not only classical philosophy but also *bhakti* and contemporary philosophies, which are quite different in substance and form from that of Advaita Vedanta and, in fact, more representative of contemporary popular Indian religious experience.

[4] See Keith D'Souza, "Religion: A Notional Clarification" in George Karuvelil, ed., *Romancing the Sacred? Towards an Indian Christian Philosophy of Religion*, ATC: Bangalore, 2007, 39-69.

These were the nine discourse types I had earlier described, though more elaborately.[5] To this list I now add four more, viz., the 'agapeic', the 'gnostic', the intellectual, and the official. '*Agapeic*' discourse values the cultivation of self-giving, inclusive and charitable love, and the creation of loving communities.[6] Living in faith communities which share similar values and engaging with the larger world in different voluntary and service capacities is the pathway followed here. '*Gnostic*' discourse values inner knowledge as the means towards enlightenment. The focus here is on conquering the self and overcoming ignorance (*avidya*) and attachment.[7] *Academic* discourse values reflection and argumentation as a means towards truth, goodness, and beauty. Rational exploration, in order to understand and validate different dimensions of human life from a faith perspective, is afforded greater importance. Finally, *official* discourse values loyalty towards hierarchical and administrative leadership, and towards authoritative texts. Faithfulness and an attitude of obedience towards the tradition and its leaders – and their interpretation of the tradition – are given greater importance.

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[5] D'Souza, "Religion: A Notional Clarification," 51ff., for a fuller exposition of each of these types of discourse.

[6] *Agape* in Greek (or '*caritas*' in Latin) is a unique type of love (the love of charity), as opposed to *storge* (affectionate love based on natural relationships, e.g., familial relationships), *philia* (the love of friendship) and *eros* (erotic or sensual love). See C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, London: Fount/Harper Collins, 1960, for a good description of these four basic types of love. Also, see the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 2006, for the complementary but eventually contrasting nature of two types of love, viz., *eros* and *agape*.

[7] See Aloysius Pieris, *Love Meets Wisdom: A Christian Experience of Buddhism*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989, wherein Pieris contrasts "the *gnostic* and the *agapeic* instincts of the human person ... *Gnosis* is salvific knowledge and *agape* is redemptive love" (9, original italics).

These "manifold manifestations of religious experience and expression"[8] may be perceived to be unique combinations of three primary dimensions of religious discourse in general. Each of these dimensions, in turn, is rooted in three fundamental human desires. The *hermeneutical* dimension of religious experience and expression is rooted in our desire for cognitive meaning and purpose, the *existential* dimension is rooted in our desire for affective fulfilment, and the *communitarian* dimension is rooted in our desire for social belonging and involvement. Each of the discourse types listed above is a unique combination of these three desires or interests: cognitive, affective, and volitional. Furthermore, each of these discourses will "have a particular *focus*, be represented by specific *agents*, will be supported by certain *institutions*, will be based upon favoured *foundational texts* and will represent a certain *fundamental experience* of the religious spirit."[9] Through these and other means, specific communities or religious subgroups tend to be generated and perpetuated by these different discourses.

Rather than merely engage in one type of discourse, believers (and communities of believers) typically subscribe to a unique cluster (or complex or combination) of discourses, each cluster depending on a wide variety of influences and interests. Believers would, thus, tend to operate from an implicit or explicit hierarchy of discourses (valuing one discourse more highly over others) – both within these clusters and with respect to discourses that fall outside these clusters. The nature and scope of these clusters or combinations are subject to change, depending on various circumstances, interests and needs. For example, the 2009 World Social Forum, held in Belem, Brazil, witnessed both a partial conflict of interests and an attempted reconciliation between two socially relevant discourses, viz., the prophetic (with a stress on justice for the poor) and the cosmic (with a stress on ecological harmony). Many of the participants at this forum have strong religious moorings, and may have been challenged to relate these (ostensibly secular) social and cosmic concerns with aspects of their traditions which pay greater attention to these elements. What may hopefully emerge from the meeting of these two discourses is a consciously developed 'prophetic-cosmic' religious discourse combination.

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[8] D'Souza, "Religion: A Notional Clarification," 51.

[9] D'Souza, "Religion: A Notional Clarification," 52, original italics.

There are obviously manifest hierarchies which develop over time in any religious tradition – one discourse, or a specific combination of discourses tending to dominate during a certain spacio-temporal framework in the development of the tradition. However, it is difficult to develop a *normative* hierarchy between these different discourses, and even more so, between different combinations of these discourses. This is because there is no supra-normative position from which one may develop this hierarchy. Even in the process of establishing the core or determining criteria of any religious tradition, it is quite likely that one's personal or community's preferences and interpretations come into play in the construction of this hierarchy. What has happened historically is that at different places and times, and in different circumstances, one type of discourse (or discourse combination) either spontaneously took prominence and got better developed (by employing human and other infrastructural resources) or was developed more consciously and systematically, because of its perceived necessity and significance, or because it had more power to develop as compared to other discourses.

When one considers the nature of interreligious relations, attention is paid to the dominating theme of 'otherness' which distinguishes one religion from another. Every major religion has its own presuppositions, assumptions, and alternative religious systems; however similar they may be in terms of historical background, they constitute a thick or hard sense of 'otherness'. However, the 'otherness' in intrareligious discourse is different from the 'otherness' in interreligious discourse. In the former, the 'other' (believer or subgroup) is not a 'hard other' in the strict sense, but rather a comparatively 'soft other'. This is because the 'other's' intrareligious discourse shares many religious and even cultural grounds of meaning and purpose, even though different aspects of religion and culture are valued differently in each of these discourses within the same religious tradition. As these discourses do not exist in isolation from one another, there is a constant interaction between them, not only in the minds and hearts of believers who may subscribe to one or more discourses at a time, but also between believers who think and feel differently about religious issues as they relate with the larger realities of socio-political life. In the words of Gerald Arbuckle,

> *Every culture consists of subcultures all of which share to varying degrees common myths, symbols, and rituals, while at the same time having their own distinctive qualities. Relationships between*

> *subcultures may range from mutual respect to distrust, suspicion, fear, extreme hostility, rejection, and oppression.*[10]

Given the wide range of the nature of these relationships – from a placid and healthy extreme of mutual respect, on the one hand, to the other extreme of oppression and violence, on the other – it is fitting to ask how best these different sub-cultural discourses (and in our context, sub-religious discourses) ought to relate with one another. This consideration invites us to go beyond the realm of merely phenomenological description and enter into the area of normative considerations which would need to govern the relationship between these different discourses. I will now argue that it is necessary to protect and make space for the phenomenon of this type of internal otherness, while at the same time to delineate transcendentally unifying principles and processes which serve to bind these different discourses together whenever necessary. The first necessity (of making space for the 'other') arises from an interest based on the wisdom of plurality. The second necessity (of highlighting strands of commonness or unity) arises from another interest, viz., the interest of overcoming alienation and violence. We shall now turn our attention to the first necessity, viz., the necessity of making space for the 'other' in order to sustain intrareligious plurality.

3. The Value of Intrareligious Plurality

The phenomenon of the plurality of religions has been one of the conditions, if not one of the actual causes, for social disharmony and even conflict since time immemorial. This has taken place for various reasons and at different levels: socio-political, philosophico-theological, and at the level of ordinary ritual practices in a common domain or shared public space. At all of these levels, the 'other' has often been, at the very least, misunderstood and, at the other extreme, considered to be a potential or actual threat to the existence and sustenance of one's own religious tradition. This dynamic of flawed relationships between religious adherents (from misunderstanding, on the one extreme, through perceived and actual threat, on the other) would seem to be easily circumvented when it comes to relating with persons and communities who share a common religious background. But this has not always been the case. The histories of most major religions have seen serious ideological and political schisms, often leading to serious conflict situations lasting several years. These conflict situations can often be traced to specific attempts at a *mutual correction* between some of these different discourses. The desire for mutual correction (of especially extreme positions adopted by one or other discourse) arises when there is a perceived need to lay greater emphasis on one or other set of complementary or even contradictory values and practices. To give a benign example, some of the religious orders in Catholicism arose in the context of social situations in which religious leaders resorted to lifestyles which were perceived to be contrary to the wisdom of the tradition. In numerous other cases, however, those who proposed alternative discourses in order to correct or reform the tradition soon found themselves outside the tradition itself. Such was the case with the foundation of Christianity by Jesus and his followers, who attempted to correct perceived aberrations of Judaism but met with rejection. Similarly, the foundation of Protestantism was partially linked to a correction of perceived aberrations which had crept into late medieval western Christian theology and praxis. In India, the foundation of Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism were also partially intended to be corrections or modifications of the existing religious beliefs and social practices of the time. Many of the founders of these new religious groups initially attempted to create a space for themselves and their followers. These attempts were mostly unsuccessful (as this space was not duly recognized), leading first to the emergence of a new sect, then a new religious movement and, finally, a full-blown new religion. Many of these conflicts and schisms, on hindsight, seem to have been unnecessary and to have resulted in a colossal waste of human resources and life. Most of the reformers would not have considered their thought and practices to be in total discontinuity with the founding tradition. Rather, in many cases, successive rejections by the mother community and its governing authorities led to an eventual parting of the ways. Today, some of the descendants of the split religious traditions in question are faced with the burden of having to heal the wounds of the past and, in some cases, the arduous task of moving towards reconciliation and unity.

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[10] Gerald Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church: A Cultural Approach*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004, 26, original italics.

The sustenance of a pluralistic approach towards intrareligious discourse would serve to neutralize the conditions for unnecessary disharmony and conflict. In many cases, if some of the discourses (often novel ones) are not given an opportunity and space to flourish, the tradition as a whole may be in danger of underdevelopment, stagnation, and even decay. In this regard, there is cause for concern in contemporary

Europe, where Christianity, one of the most defining influences of European culture, seems to be facing gradual decay. It is not easy to pinpoint the exact causes of this phenomenon, but perhaps one of them is the lack of adequate and permissible reinterpretations of the tradition (without sacrificing its core elements) which would be more in tandem with the contemporary European *Sitz-im-Leben*. Nietzsche's dictum, "God is dead," seems to have been a prophetic warning, in this regard, for contemporary European society. For traditional Christian approaches do not seem to sufficiently satisfy the contemporary European soul. In yet another tradition, the disinclination (among many religious leaders and lay faithful) to provide salubrious reinterpretations within Islam to suit modern sensibilities is another serious cause for concern, especially in our times of increasing fundamentalism and religiously-affiliated terrorism.

However, these bleak and dismal facts are neither the only nor the primary reasons why the phenomenon of religious diversity needs to be supported. Rather, a major reason why such a variety of intrareligious discourses needs to be sustained is that each and every discourse, if it is reasonably and responsibly related to the founding vision, values, and goals of the tradition, has the resources *to add meaning and value to the tradition as a whole*. In this regard, perhaps the religion which allows for the most diversity within its folds is Hinduism. In fact, Hinduism is more of a way of life rather than a 'religion' understood as a systematic, cohesive organization held together by a common creed, code, and cult. Hinduism has grown more by assimilation of various communities and belief-systems rather than a standardized imposition of core beliefs and customs. The major leitmotif which seems to tie Hinduism together is the social practice of caste (tied in with another core belief in *karma*), rather than any set of dogmatic beliefs. The three legitimate '*margas*' of *jnana*, *bhakti*, and *karma* testify to an underlying plurality that is operative within Hindu consciousness. This plurality perhaps has it extreme philosophical fructification in the Jain epistemological doctrine of '*anekantavada*,' which stresses the perspectival nature of truth. Consequently, it is no wonder that at the practical level Jainism has emphasized '*ahimsa*' or non-violence to an extreme degree, including even vegetative life within the ambit of beings which deserve the right to life.

While Hinduism has given a premium to ideological diversity coupled with social uniformity (especially in terms of caste), Christianity, on the other hand, has given a premium to ideological uniformity (defined by Magisterial authority) coupled with social diversity. However, even in mainstream Catholicism, which may be perceived to be one of the most centralized, organized, 'hierarchicalized' and conservative religions, there is a plethora of spiritualities and, consequently, communities with quite divergent spiritual visions, values, and goals. The human spirit (influenced by the divine Spirit), it would seem, cannot be restrained by religious boundaries: it seeks to express itself in novel and manifold ways both within and without the great world religions.

But these different religious discourses – especially intrareligious discourses – have numerous opportunities to be intertwined at various forums and, thus, to mutually influence one another. Such mutual interaction and influence may lead to cases of fecund hybridization, leading to newer and more relevant discourse clusters. The example of a 'prophetic-cosmic' discourse cluster arising – among other events – from the recent World Social Forum has already been illustrated. Another more widespread example is that of socially significant projects undertaken by those who subscribe to a dominant 'ascetic' discourse, yet are exposed to, and challenged by other more socially sensitive discourses (e.g., 'prophetic' or 'agapeic' or 'cosmic' discourses). Numerous Catholic priests and nuns have, thus, been engaged in education, healthcare, and social work all over the globe for many centuries and, more recently, Buddhist monks find themselves engaged in political advocacy in South and South East Asia.[11] However, in this regard, not all of these mutually influencing relationships among different discourses have proved salubrious. One can call to mind a wide variety of recent events wherein political causes with violent manifestations have been overtly supported and abetted by the clergy of different religious affiliations. We shall now pay attention to this problematic issue of religiously-based violence, examine its conditions and causes, and explore pathways towards its resolution.

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[11] Thich Nath Hanh, a prominent Vietnamese Zen Buddhist, is a good example of a religious leader who advocates political sensitivity and involvement, on the one hand, and religious and spiritual discipline, on the other. An even more famous example is that of the Dalai Lama, whose standoffs with the Chinese government on the issue of religious freedom and human rights in Tibet have commanded sympathetic world attention.

4. Limits to Intrareligious Plurality: The Underlying Unity

While the phenomenon of a variety of intrareligious discourses has its many beneficial features, this phenomenon may also serve to be the condition of disharmony and even violence between some of the different discourses in question. Disharmony and violence are ethical or practical concerns, but they have their origin – partially but significantly – in epistemological presuppositions and assumptions. We shall first pay attention to some of these epistemological considerations governing intrareligious relations before we turn our gaze upon more ethical concerns.

There are four main epistemological positions with respect to reality claims: on the one extreme, there is scepticism, wherein the process of making claims is met with severe doubt, as the conditions for arriving at truth are held to be too demanding or too difficult to fulfil. On the other extreme, there is realism, wherein making claims is governed by bold certitude, because there is judged to be an intuitive correspondence between aspects of reality, on the one hand, and the way these aspects of reality are perceived and claims about them communicated, on the other. In between these two positions, there are two comparatively moderate epistemological positions, viz., relativism and pluralism. Relativism is an offshoot of scepticism with regard to the making of universal claims, but nevertheless allows for personally or community-based constructed truth systems and claims. In the words of Maria Baghramian, "relativism about truth (alethic relativism) is the claim that views and standards of truth and falsity may vary across cultures, social groups, historical periods or even individuals, and every effort to adjudicate them is bound to be futile."[12] Pluralism is closer to realism, in that it is concerned about making true claims about reality, but nevertheless wants to retain a perspectival understanding of objective reality (based on subjective and community uniqueness). Baghramian contrasts relativism and pluralism in the following manner:

> Pluralism ... agrees with relativism on the issue of conceptual diversity but parts company from it by insisting that not only are there limits to the scope of such diversity but also that in many instances we can distinguish between better and worse, or more and less fruitful and productive, conceptual systems. The pluralist, unlike

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[12] Maria Baghramian, *Relativism*, London: Routledge, 2004, 121.

> the relativist, believes that there are culture-transcendent constraints on what is an acceptable belief- or value-system.[13]

There is, indeed, a need to apply 'culture-transcendent constraints' to conceptual systems and, by extension, to intrareligious discourse systems. Such constraints are especially called for when two types of tyranny are in danger of manifesting themselves in society, viz., the 'tyranny of fundamentalism' and the 'tyranny of relativism'[14] – the former an exaggerated form of realism and the latter an exaggerated form of relativism. These two types of tyranny are also found to be operative in intrareligious relations.

When the 'tyranny of fundamentalism' is operative, a particular ideology and praxis is judged to be the sole and primary discourse form within the tradition. This type of tyranny is at best a nuisance, because it is based on an air of superiority which is incongruous with an increasingly democratic, egalitarian, and culture sensitive world. The relationship between subgroups within any religious tradition that such an attitude generates can only be inimical to harmony and sometimes constitutes the direct cause of religious unrest and violence. But the 'tyranny of relativism' is not less problematic. This may take the form of one group within a religious tradition conducting itself in a manner in which its members are quite unconcerned about other groups. This may be because they find the ideology or the praxis of the other group non-appealing, unconvincing, or not at all religiously normative. This attitude may lead to indifference at the very least, but it may also on occasion generate patterns of domination, subjugation and even attempts at suppression of other subgroups. This is because unequal power relations may sometimes fill in the void created by the lack of any normative theoretical or practical framework to adjudicate between different traditions.[15]

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[13] Baghramian, *Relativism*, 304-305.

[14] This term, "the tyranny of relativism," was made famous by Pope Benedict XVI shortly before his election to the papacy. The then Cardinal Ratzinger used the term primarily in reference to what he perceived as the intellectual malaise of 'postmodernism' which has swept Europe over the past few decades, resulting in a reluctance to commit oneself to, or to recognize the validity of metaphysical and epistemological claims.

[15] See Hye-Kyung Kim and Michael Wreen, "Relativism, Absolutism and Tolerance," *Metaphilosopy* 34, 4 (2003), 447-459. The authors argue that there is neither an inductive nor a deductive relationship between relativism and tolerance. They, similarly, argue against an inductive or deductive relationship between

Of the two tyrannies, the tyranny of fundamentalism is easier to comprehend.[16] In a well summarized book on the phenomena of various types of fundamentalism, Steve Bruce gives us a basic definition of the term: "in general, fundamentalisms rest on the claim that some source of ideas, usually a text, is inerrant and complete."[17] In actual practice, however, what emerge are rival interpretations of what is held to be more sacrosanct or less sacrosanct – i.e., what needs to be taken more literally and less literally – within common revelatory texts. That is why there is so much diversity and so many conflicts among fundamentalist groups inspired by the same scriptures. In this regard, more hierarchically and centrally controlled religions, such as Catholicism, leave less scope for popular and mass fundamentalism. According to Bruce,

> Evangelical Protestantism and Islam suppose that authoritative knowledge is democratically available. Any right-spirited person can discern God's will by reading the scriptures or studying the Qur'ān... [This] is far less so with Catholicism, where access to authoritative religious knowledge is controlled by a centralized bureaucracy.[18]

But fundamentalist discourse is not solely restricted to or governed by religious matters. Such discourse is often influenced by a host of social factors, the most significant one being the rise of modernity, and its perception as a challenge to tradition. Modernity has resulted in a vast array of changes which seem inimical to traditional lifestyles and ways of thinking: new market-based economic relations (which, in turn, lead to new class relations), reason rather than tradition as the new social regulator, greater egalitarianism, democratic rather than autocratic processes, greater cultural diversity, new gender roles, etc.[19] Many forms

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absolutism and tolerance, though it would seem that this does not require too much demonstration.

[16] According to Edward Farley, "the term, fundamentalism, initially described a trans-denominational movement among conservative Protestant Christian groups in the United States which, in the first part of the twentieth century, vigorously and publicly defended biblical inerrancy against historical criticism and biblical geology and cosmology against the theory of evolution." "Fundamentalism: A Theory," *Cross Currents* 55, 3 (2005) 378.

[17] Steve Bruce, *Fundamentalism*, Cambridge: Polity, 2000, 13.

[18] Bruce, *Fundamentalism*, 98-99.

[19] See Chapter Two, "Modernity: The Great Satan," of Bruce, *Fundamentalism*, for an overview of the many reasons why modernity is perceived as a threat to those

of apparently religious fundamentalism are governed more by political and economic interests rather than motivated by purely or even primarily religious interests. However, religiously-veiled fundamentalism continues to manifest itself in various violent forms, the most obvious being the 'Sept 11' (2001) attack in the USA and, closer home, the '26/11' (2008) attack in Mumbai. Fundamentalism is tyrannical not only because it is the seedbed for these overt forms of violence, but more so, because of the widespread reactionary approach to development adopted by various fundamentalist leaders, that too often sanctioned by an assumed divine decree.

In contrast to the tyranny of fundamentalism, the tyranny of relativism is not only more subtle, but also potentially divisive of social forces, based on an insular approach towards the interpretation of reality. Let us turn to a contemporary political manifestation of relativism (encouraged by a sympathetic postmodern hearing) in order to illustrate the potentiality of this type of tyranny. The issue we will briefly consider concerns the validity of the application of human rights across all cultures and nations. In agreement with relativistic and postmodern sentiments – though seemingly largely for political, not for epistemological or ethical reasons – Chinese officials resist the imposition of western standards of civic and political propriety on the Chinese way of life and governance. In response to such a position which appeals to an ideology of cultural relativism (based on a spirit of cultural isolationism and an attitude of cultural superiority not alien to Chinese history), Xiaorong Li comments:

> Cultural relativists largely rested their normative claims on the empirical claim that cultural and value diversity exists. But the existence of moral diversity does no more to justify that we ought to respect different moral values than the existence of disease, hunger, torture, slavery[20] do to justify that we ought to value them. Empirical claims thus are not suitable as the basis for developing moral principles such as "Never judge other cultures" or "We ought to tolerate different values." Consequently, if it is proved that China

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operating from traditional mindsets. Also, see Farley, "Fundamentalism: A Theory," where a similar analysis is provided.

[20] To this list of 'disease, hunger, torture, slavery', we could well add 'terrorism' as the primary modern malaise which threatens to disrupt the international socio-economic order. What is disconcerting is that terrorism is not just a product of national and cultural (and basically eco-political) interests, but also manifestly religious interests.

> had its distinct culture and values, this fact does not entail that such values should not be judged by other cultures and values.[21]

With Li, we feel that it is both possible and necessary to judge other cultures and values (and by extension, other intrareligious discourses). The *possibility* of judging the 'other' is based on a claim to the (transcendental) universality of rational consciousness, a claim associated with an *epistemological* position. The *necessity* of judging the 'other' arises from a need to redress the conditions for and the actual causes of 'tyranny' – a need associated with an *ethical* concern.

The *possibility* of judging the 'other' is based on an acceptance of the transcendental nature of human reason – an epistemological position, which has ethical ramifications. If we do not accept this commonness in human nature and rationality, then we may well be in danger of subtly or overtly reinstituting casteist, racist, gender-biased, and cultural prejudices, viz., that one caste, race, gender, or culture is intrinsically superior (i.e., 'hard-wired' to be superior) to the other. One does not have to go very far to discover that these types of claims (in all of these areas) and their attendant socio-political consequences have been a part of human history – a part of history which general consensus among those exposed to liberal education processes would judge to be socially deficient in terms of our current perspective. It would seem to be intellectually naïve to want to reinforce these old dysfunctional relations (and to justify them epistemologically), though, of course, at the level of political machinations, such justified inequalities may be considered to be astute or advantageous. Such intellectual and cultural naïveté is, unfortunately, widespread on account of a lack of adequate education and power to question the status quo. Nevertheless, it is precisely the task of philosophy (and of an enlightened theology) to call into question the presuppositions and assumptions upon which such forms of naïveté are based.

The only discourse that can serve to obviate both tyrannies of relativism and fundamentalism is a unitive discourse, based on common principles which would appeal to competing subgroups. These principles could either be found within a common tradition itself, or if this is not possible, within a larger discourse based on transcendental, rational principles of argumentation. But the recourse to this type of rationality is not only adopted in order to avoid these two types of tyrannies. Such a transcendental discourse also serves to correct the more serious distortions and dysfunctional elements that may have crept into different religious traditions over time. These distortions and dysfunctional elements also constitute conditions, if not causes for subtle and more manifest forms of intra and inter-group conflicts. This brings us to the *necessity* of judging the 'other.' This necessity is based on the perception of dysfunctional presuppositions and assumptions in the other's social framework which are seen to be harmful for the common good. While it is true that cultural and religious (and sub-cultural and sub-religious) groups give us a sense of identity based on a common narrative and on common ideological and practical principles, it is also true that these narratives and these ideologies and practical principles are not without their faults and anachronisms. Thus, it is that, in response to this social characteristic of a community-based narrative identity, Paul Ricoeur asks: "Why move from teleology to deontology? And where? I suggest a basic and massive answer: there is *morality*, in the sense of moral obligation, because there is *violence* ... because violence is evil, and evil is what *is* and what *ought not* to be."[22] One needs to move from a teleological perspective (based on what is considered to be 'good') to a deontological perspective (based on what is considered to be 'right'), in order to correct such deficient ideologies and malpractices.

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[21] Xiaorong Li, "Postmodernism and Universal Human Rights: Why Theory and Reality Don't Mix," *Free Inquiry* 18, 4 (1998), 31.

There are many avenues which one may pursue in this desire to factor in a deontological moment into cultural and religious development. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was an attempt at a consensual formulation of rules and guidelines which would place limits to regional socio-political narratives and their interpretation of how human life is to be valued. It was partly as a development of these UN guidelines that the 'Parliament of the World's Religions' in Chicago (1993) initiated the 'Global Ethic' project. However, it was felt that a declaration of political rights without an ethical basis would not provide sufficient and appropriate motivation to work towards providing and sustaining human dignity. Hence, the 'Global Ethic' project aims at the formulation of basic principles and guidelines culled from different religious traditions. The "Declaration toward a Global Ethic" states:

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[22] Paul Ricoeur, "The Teleological and Deontological Structures of Action: Aristotle and/or Kant?" in *Contemporary French Philosophy*, ed. A. Phillips Griffiths, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 106, original italics.

> By a global ethic we do not mean a global ideology or a single unified religion beyond all existing religions, and certainly not the domination of one religion over all others. By a global ethic we mean a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes.[23]

Such a 'fundamental consensus' is more easily workable within a religious tradition itself, because though what is 'good' is largely and loosely held to be in common, what is the 'right' means towards this good may often be in dispute. However, many conflicts are not merely restricted to the boundaries of any given religion, but affect others as well, e.g., in contemporary forms of religiously-inspired terrorism. In such cases, when there are many communities affected, both 'good' ends and 'right' means may be in dispute. It is especially at these moments that any critique of violence needs to transcend narrow narrative conceptions of the 'good' and to enter into the deontological domain of the 'right.'

It is expedient to explore right-based or deontological discourse within the religious traditions themselves. This is not an impossible task, as some form of the 'Golden Rule' (with both its positive and negative formulations)[24] and its many applications feature in most religious literature. Even in a purely philosophical work such as Paul Ricoeur's mini-ethics in *Oneself as Another*, where he contrasts the ethical foundation of social life, characterized by teleological and narrative unity, with moral reflection, characterized by universal and deontological reflection, he ultimately plumbs for the 'Golden Rule' as a sound deontological principle which would provide this moral dimension to practical life.[25] If the 'Golden Rule' as a sound moral principle makes sense within the secular and philosophical domain, it will more easily be located within religiously-based moral discourse, with its many narratives, wisdom sayings, and interdictions.

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[23] Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel, eds., *A Global Ethic*, London: SCM Press, 1993, 21, as quoted in Michael Amaladoss, "A Global Ethic for Global Peace? Reflections from Indian Perspectives" in *Pilgrims in Dialogue: A New Configuration of Religions for Millennium Christianity*, ed. Antony Kalliath, Bangalore: Dharmaram, 2000, 53.

[24] "Do to others what you would like them to do to you," and "Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you."

[25] See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. See also Alan Donagan, *The Theory of Morality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977, for a focus on the Golden Rule as a means towards the formulation of a deontological ethical principle.

Another attempt at a consensus methodology based on deontological principles and processes is the 'discourse ethics' of Jürgen Habermas. Unlike an insular Kantian (or even Ricoeurian) approach, Habermas' ethical procedure involves a dialogical process aimed at inter-subjective and collective consensus. One of the primary principles of 'discourse ethics' reads: "only those norms may claim to be valid that could meet with the approval of all those affected in their capacity as participants in practical discourse."[26] Furthermore, specific contexts and consequences have to be taken into consideration: "For a norm to be valid, the consequences and side effects of its general observance for the satisfaction of each person's particular interests must be acceptable to all."[27] These conditions and regulations may seem to be very idealistic, but in practice, the process of the formulation of the "Declaration of Human Rights" and the "Global Ethic Project" of the Parliament of World's Religions are good examples of arriving at consensus on deontological themes which transcend narrow understandings of the 'good'.

This type of unitive and deontological discourse (reason and 'right'-focused, rather than narrative and 'good'-focused) does not preclude a pluralist ethical approach towards practical life. That is, while there is a common rationality which unites humankind, this common rationality is capable of giving rise to numerous 'forms of life', but forms of life which have porous rather than rigid boundaries – to use a Wittgensteinian term and, at the same time, to distance oneself from its narrow or insular interpretation.

In this section, we have not focused as much on theoria as much as on praxis. We are not merely interested in the justification of the validity of religious claims on theoretical grounds, but rather on practical grounds: negatively, the grounds or conditions which may lead to social disharmony and violence, and positively, the grounds or conditions which may better create dialogue, better understanding, mutual fecundity, and, ultimately, more easily lead to social and religious progress. It is to this last concern that we shall now pay attention, viz., the creation of adequate conditions for the sustenance of plural discourse and the limitations to such discourses whenever warranted.

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[26] Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. C. Lenhardt and S. Nicholsen, Cambridge, MT: MIT Press, 1990, 66.

[27] Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 197.

5. Intrareligious Dialogue to Sustain Plurality and Unity

We have argued that it is necessary and salubrious to sustain both a plurality of intrareligious discourses and a unity that binds them together. We now propose the unique discourse form of intrareligious dialogue as a concrete and primary strategy which would enable an enhancement of positive relations between believers who subscribe to different discourses and discourse clusters. Even in contemporary socio-political approaches towards 'multiculturalism', dialogue between different religious believers is not something to be avoided, but instead something to be fostered. In the words of Ernst Ballin, "multiculturalism with the covert message that religion is a private matter that we had better keep silent about in public is therefore not all that tolerant. It excludes the deepest motives of the encounter between the various communities that make up a society. In contrast, interreligious dialogue requires respectful openheartedness."[28] Such an encounter based on 'respectful openheartedness' is not only useful for learning about and from one another's communities and traditions, but also that we may be able to mutually challenge and propose changes in the way we interpret our traditions for contemporary situations. However, for such mutual learning and correction to take place, there need to be suitable *conditions* of dialogue which make these processes both possible and reasonable. In the words of Michael Barnes, "dialogue is less about debating truth-claims than about creating the conditions within which the *questions themselves* can be heard and understood."[29]

Catherine Cornille outlines basic epistemological, psychological, and doctrinal conditions for dialogue between religions – conditions which may be considered to be equally significant in the area of intrareligious dialogue.[30] First of all, at the *epistemological* level, we need to have the ability to understand the other's perspective without abandoning one's own:

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[28] Ernst M. H. Hirsch Ballin, "Human Rights" in Christiane Timmerman and Barbara Segaert, eds., *How to Conquer the Barriers to Intercultural Dialogue*, Brussels: Peter Lang, 2005, 159.

[29] Michael Barnes, "Christian Faith in a Pluralist World," in Timmerman and Segaert, eds., *How to Conquer the Barriers to Intercultural Dialogue*, 61 (original italics). This article of Barnes is one among an interesting collection of articles, wherein the nature and possibility of such conditions are explored, especially from theological and sociological perspectives.

> It is possible to reconstruct and understand other conceptions of ultimate reality in a sense that can at least resonate with the understanding of the believers themselves... [S]emantic connections may be established between different symbols which would then form the bridge for further analogical understanding.[31]

Secondly, at the *psychological* level, Cornille precludes "a total commitment to one's own conception of God and a total openness to that of the other,"[32] even though this approach seems attractive and magnanimous. Rather, a more reasonable dialogical position she advocates is one wherein, "within the commitment to a particular tradition a certain openness to the other is required, while in the openness to the other a firm rootedness in a particular conception of the ultimate reality is necessary."[33] Such an approach requires a certain psychological maturity – a maturity that is characterized by a sense of security and confidence in one's beliefs and convictions, without feeling threatened by the beliefs and convictions of the 'other'. For Jacques Waardenburg, these forms of subtle and overt aggression are rooted, among other things, in

> mental weakness (*sic*). I refer to subservience to fixed traditions and absolutized truths, self-defence against what is felt to be different and foreign, and closing oneself off from what is beyond the horizon. I also refer to attempts at intellectual domination ... glorifying one's own exclusivity, instead of accepting other ways of life and recognizing that they have analogous claims to existence.[34]

Quite often, such 'mental weakness' (or psychological and sociological immaturity) stems from "sheer ignorance, refusal of education, and lack of simple reasoning ... no idea of the presence of other life values, no interest in past or present-day other cultures, and ultimately no trust in other people."[35] Such relationships – insular at best and dominating at worst – are unfortunately characteristic of much of interreligious and intrareligious equations over the centuries. Quite often, the attitudes at the basis of these relationships are so stubborn and entrenched, that not even the many technological and social advances of modernity can succeed in substantially eclipsing their existence.

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[30] See Catherine Cornille, "Conditions for the Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue" in Timmerman and Segaert, eds., *How to Conquer the Barriers to Intercultural Dialogue*, 25-42.

[31] Cornille, "Conditions for the Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue," 40.

[32] Cornille, "Conditions for the Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue," 40

[33] Cornille, "Conditions for the Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue," 40.

[34] Jacques Waardenburg, "Religious Identity and Intercultural Dialogue" in Timmerman and Segaert, eds., *How to Conquer the Barriers to Intercultural Dialogue*, 186.

Finally, for Cornille, at the *doctrinal* level, there needs to be a "fundamental belief in the unity of all truth ... the conviction that this truth may actually manifest itself in new and unexpected ways in and through the other religion... [T]he elements of truth recognized in the other religion will never be completely discontinuous with one's own conception of truth."[36] Indeed, within the same religion, the task of finding 'continuity' with other discourses or discourse-clusters is comparatively easier. Cornille concludes her essay by asserting that "the other will be regarded as a competitor and an enemy until all of the conditions are fulfilled for a genuinely religious dialogue. If the fulfilment of these conditions has become possible in Christianity, which has, after all, been called the most imperialistic and exclusivistic of religions, it must be possible in all religions."[37]

Jacques Waardenburg adds an important *material* (eco-political) condition to this list of conditions for dialogue – a condition which has more to do with power equations between different communities of discourse rather then purely epistemological, psychological, and doctrinal considerations.[38] Similarly, for Francis Houtart, an important condition "is the existence of a *similar social status*. If one religious group claims and enjoys a privileged status in society, dialogue is very difficult."[39] There are many elements which go to comprise social status, but economic and political power, access to higher education and cultural and global exposure are some of the defining features of higher forms of social status. Often the bestowing of a high form of social status towards one religious discourse goes along with the downplaying of competing discourses. Some of these methods of downplaying include shaming strategies, the creation of guilt in the adherents of the other discourses, forbidding self and community expression in ideology and praxis by members of the other discourse communities, etc. Gerald Arbuckle illustratively highlights strategies of gossip, shame (the creation of guilt and the diminishing of one's honour or reputation), and humour (ridicule) as mechanisms of violence, which tend to create a hierarchy of discourses in favour of one's own.[40] Houtart adds that another condition in order to ensure good relations between different communities "is a secular State, as it is *the only way* to create genuine cultural pluralism."[41] This is sometimes sadly true for interreligious relations and, ever worse, for relations between different religious communities within the same mother tradition (e.g., Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, and Sunnis and Shias in Iraq).

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[35] Cornille, "Conditions for the Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue," 40.

[36] Cornille, "Conditions for the Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue," 41.

[37] Cornille, "Conditions for the Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue," 42. Cornille does not mention the source of this contentious allegation at the end of the quotation, but there is no doubt that over the past few decades, mainline Christian communities seem to have learned much from past experiences of relationships characterized by different forms of alienation with regard to other religious communities, and have now somewhat reversed this process, instead investing much energy in constructive processes of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

[38] See Waardenburg, "Religious Identity and Intercultural Dialogue," 186.

[39] Francois Houtart, "Religious Identity" in Timmerman and Segaert, eds., *How to Conquer the Barriers to Intercultural Dialogue*, 114, italics added.

There is no doubt that at some point in the development of any religious tradition, certain discourses or clusters of discourses are invested with more power than other discourses.[42] The nobility and stature of any such intrareligious discourse are reflected precisely at these high points of eco-political power, when the discourse in question can use its power to dominate and subjugate other discourses, either overtly or covertly, often in the name of assumedly religious interests. A well known example of this in the Christian tradition is the period of the 'Inquisition', when fear and terror were some of the means employed towards doctrinal education, rather than pastoral and spiritual concern. Another more contemporary example is Wahhabi Islamic discourse (sanctioned by political patronage), which seems to be instilling a similar fear and conformity among the faithful, not only in doctrinal matters but even in practical and cultural affairs. There are, indeed, numerous instances and examples of insalubrious and counterproductive conditions which often serve to create division rather than harmony among different interreligious and intrareligious discourses. Gerald Arbuckle makes a systematic study of this in *Violence, Society and the Church: A Cultural Approach*, an analysis that could as well be applied to other religions besides Christianity. According to Arbuckle, "processes in a culture which foster or allow people to be violent are to be found ultimately in its symbols, myths and rituals,"[43] i.e., cultural aspects foundational to any given intrareligious discourse. Arbuckle goes on to enunciate a few operative axioms which form the basis of violence.[44] A few of these axioms are very illustrative from the point of view of conflict situations between different discourses within the same religion: Axiom 1: "*Groups see their culture as "clean" or "pure" and others as "dirty" or "impure," and therefore dangerous – to be avoided, changed or eliminated.*"[45] Axiom 3 reads: "cultures have an in-built resistance to change, and this can lead to violence against people or groups who advocate change. Cultures serve as defences against individual and group anxiety."[46] Axiom 5 states: "Bullying is more likely to occur in hierarchical cultures than in cultures with a mythology of collaboration."[47] These and other operative presuppositions and assumptions are fertile grounds for intrareligious and interreligious disharmony.

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[40] See Chapter Four of Gerald Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church: A Cultural Approach*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004.

[41] Francis Houtart, "Religious Identity" in Timmerman and Segaert, eds., *How to Conquer the Barriers to Intercultural Dialogue*, 114, italics added.

[42] Perhaps more than any other contemporary philosopher who has identified themes governing discourse with power equations is Michel Foucault. One may not entirely agree with Foucault's reductionist and determinist analyses of discourse structures and patterns, but one cannot deny that nuances of a Nietzschean 'will to power' – pivotal to Foucault's reflection on this theme – may often be subliminally and even overtly operative in intrareligious relations.

However, Arbuckle optimistically concludes his book by illustrating key features of 'para-modernity' (a new paradigm of social consciousness beyond both modernity and post-modernity) as possibly a new primary set of conditions best suited to create a mindset open towards and ready to sustain a plurality of discourse. Key features of 'para-modernity' include "respect for the person and cultural identity, interdependence, systems, collaboration, holistic health, imagination, spirituality, gender equality, accountability, reconciliation, and nonviolence. These are 'signals of transcendence' in a world where violence is frequently assumed to be normal."[48] What is clear in such a 'para-modern' paradigm is that there is a need to sustain both plurality and unity of cultural discourses and, in the context of our reflection, intrareligious discourses. While a 'pre-modern' consciousness would result in a naïve approach towards other discourses, a 'modern' consciousness would likely introduce 'master-slave' dynamics into intercultural and interreligious relations, and a 'postmodern' consciousness would be satisfied with assuming a relativistic position – a position which does not preclude violence, as we have observed. The need of the hour is to work out various forms of human relationships between and within religions which can tie into significant elements of what Arbuckle has identified as a 'para-modern' consciousness. Such a consciousness would give rise to many processes necessary for healthy intrareligious discourse: embracing risk and trust in order to overcome fear of the 'other' and of the future, respecting and being open to other discourses based on a spirit of egalitarianism rather than patterns of domination, learning from one another rather than operating from insularity and superiority, and addressing violent interpretations and actions together in order to create a safer and more harmonious world.

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[43] Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church*, 15.

[44] Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church*, 15-27.

[45] Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church*, 15, original italics.

[46] Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church*, 18.

[47] Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church*, 23.

6. Conclusion

We began by highlighting different nuances prevalent within religious discourse. Religions are not uniform belief or practical systems with all adherents abiding by the same norms or inspired by the same concerns. In fact, in every religious tradition, there will be individuals and communities who engage in quite different forms of discourse (or discourse-clusters) within the tradition itself. I have highlighted about a dozen of the more outstanding types of these discourses in the first part of the paper. In the second part, I have attempted to argue that this diversity within religious discourse should be sustained, for three primary reasons. Firstly, in order to provide the space for new discourses and interpretations to arise, especially when some of these are attempts to correct and purify the religion from accumulated aberrations and misinterpretations over time. Secondly, because diversity brings richness of meaning and value to any religion, as well as an opportunity for the human spirit to find expression in a variety of forms. Finally, in order that different discourses may mutually influence one another, both learn and teach from one another and both correct and be corrected by one another as an ongoing process. In the third part, I have focused on violent manifestations of religious discourse. Two forms of violence I have especially focused upon are the 'tyranny of fundamentalism' and the 'tyranny of relativism'. Both of these types of tyranny (and other forms of violence) need to be countered by recourse to transcendental or universal rational argumentation – a form of deontological reasoning that goes beyond a person's or his/her discourse-community's narrative identity and somewhat narrow outlook on life. Finally, in the last part, I have proposed that the avenue of dialogue between different discourses be diligently pursued. Dialogue is a useful means not only to learn from and contribute towards the wealth of other discourses, but also to establish a common ground of discourse in order to address violent interpretations and actions. In this regard, I have outlined major conditions which can further such dialogue and the counterproductive conditions which serve as hindrance or obstacle to dialogue. When these and other negative conditions are overcome and more healthy conditions are created, we will be able to celebrate the plurality and the unity within intrareligious discourse and within religious discourse in general.

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[48] Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church*, 238.

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A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BUDDHIST VIEW OF LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF VATICAN II

Thomas Kochumuttom◆

1. Introduction

Vatican Council II, in its historic document on the religions of the world, *Nostra Aetate*, has made a very positive statement on Buddhism. It reads as follows: "Buddhism *in its multiple forms* acknowledges *the radical insufficiency* of this *shifting world.* It *teaches a path* by which, men *in a devout and confident spirit*, can either reach *a state of absolute freedom* or attain *supreme enlightenment* by *their own efforts* or by *higher assistance.*"[1] This brief statement, indeed, reflects the new outlook that the Catholic Church wants to be adopted in her ongoing interaction with other religions. This essay makes an attempt to spell out its details and the enriching elements of Buddhism from a Christian perspective.

2. "… In Its Multiple Forms"

Buddhism has its origin from Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, in India, in the 6th century BC. It was, indeed, a single movement based on his life-experiences and teachings, and its initial success and popularity were very impressive. The early Buddhism known as *Tera-vada* – the elders' teaching – was more informal and practical than academic and speculative, a more simple and sincere style of life than an institution. Already by early Christian centuries, however, it started being ideologically divided into different schools of thought and, by the 3rd century AD, four such schools appeared on the stage. First, there were the *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*

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[1] Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, §2; emphasis added. Each italicised phrase will be dealt with separately in the following sections of this essay, thus, offering a Christian commentary to the statement of Vatican Council II on Buddhism.

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schools, the former being more rigid and conservative and the latter more liberal and progressive. *Hinayana* school was further split into *Vaibhashika* and *Sautrantika* with reference to the different texts (*Vibhasha* and *Sutra*) that the respective followers acknowledged to be basic. *Mahayana* also was eventually divided into *Madhyamika* and *Yogacara*. While *Hinayana* and its subdivisions maintain realism with regard to the empirical world, *Mahayana* and its subdivisions argue in more idealistic lines. Even so, the *Madhyamika* School of philosophy is more interested in logic and epistemology; the *Yogacara* is more metaphysical in approach and content. *Hinayana* retains the austere and monastic lifestyle with little place for rituals and religious practices and puts more stress on human efforts to realize the goal of life. For them, the Buddha is just a human guide showing the path, not the saviour God. In *Mahayana*, however, he is deified and is considered an *avatar* of God, not only to be imitated but even to be worshipped. Here austerity is relaxed, monastic life made optional, and human efforts are complemented or even replaced by God's grace in response to human faith.

By the early Christian centuries, however, we see Buddhism declining in India for various socio-political and religio-philosophical reasons. Lack of an organised lay community, too much concentration on monasticism, withdrawal of the royal patronage, internal divisions and groupings, strong opposition from Hinduism, gradual loss of the original identity, and, finally, the Muslim invasion of the country in the 11th century AD, which resulted in the destruction of the Buddhist monasteries and the dispersal of the monks may be held responsible for the disappearance and the near extermination of Buddhism from India.

But almost simultaneously Buddhism was carried to other countries, especially to countries around and to the east of India: Tibet, China, Thailand, Burma, Japan, and Sri Lanka. Wherever it went, in a spirit of openness and sharing it adapted to and adopted from the local cultures and religions. Thus, while it played the role of creatively transforming those religions and cultures, in each place it, by a process of self-criticism and assimilation, took a new form. Thus, today we have, in addition to the different schools of Buddhism mentioned above, a multiplicity of Buddhism in terms of different cultural and religious contexts. This accounts for Buddhism qualified variously as Tibetan, Chinese, Thai, Burmese, Japanese, and Sri Lankan. There are also cases of different forms of Buddhism named after the central concerns; for example, *Zen* (in Japan) and *Pure Land* (in China) forms of Buddhism: The former concentrates on meditation (*zen*, *dhyan*), while the latter on faith in the Buddha incarnate as Amitabha, who is believed to carry the devotees gratuitously to the state of realization. This, indeed, is the story of Buddhism in its multiple forms.

3. "Radical Insufficiency"

"All is suffering [*duhkha*]," said the Buddha. By "all" he obviously meant the empirical reality consisting of matter (*bhuta*) and material factors (*bhautika*) as well as the mind (*citta*) and mental factors (*caitta*). This is what the *Samkhya* system calls 'the nature' (*prakrti*). All this is suffering, according to the Buddha, in the sense that the empirical reality cannot at all offer anything that is absolutely satisfactory and eternally valuable. Thus, "Buddhism in all its multiple forms" – *Tera-vada*, *Hinayana*, *Mahayana*, *Vaibhavshikha*, *Sautrantika*, Tibetan, Chinese, Thai, Burmese, Japanese, Sri Lankan, *Zen*, and *Pure Land* forms – "acknowledges the radical insufficiency of this shifting world." Indeed, this world cannot take human beings very far. "What then will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins life? Or, what has a man to offer in exchange for this life?" (Mt. 16:26). These words of Jesus Christ explain the Buddhist position: the truth of suffering (*duhkha-satya*).

The Buddhists speak of three levels of suffering: *duhkha-duhkhata* (sufferings as such, for example, the bodily pains and aches), *viparinama-duhkhata* (psychological sufferings arising from changes in circumstances, for example, disappointments and anxieties), and *samaskara-duhkhata* (sufferings with roots in the unconscious). Of them, the first two kinds of suffering are everybody's experience and are comparatively superficial. They inevitably come and go, and as such they may be ignored. They will pass over sooner or later by themselves. The third type of suffering, however, is a deeper one and is more difficult to overcome. This kind of suffering is traced to some experience of remote past. One may have long forgotten the experience, but the impressions it has left in the deeper layers of mind would continue to cause pain. These deeper layers of mind are called, in Buddhism, *alaya-vijnana* (store-conscious) because it is in it that the impressions (*bijas*, seeds) are stored up. For all practical purposes, the *alaya-vijnana* is the same as the unconscious of modern psychology. To be healed of these deep rooted sufferings one must delve deep into the unconscious, and uncover the hidden and forgotten experiences, and be reconciled with them through positive thinking, forgiveness, repentance, rationalization, and self-acceptance. That is, indeed, liberation and enlightenment: "For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear" (Mt. 10:26).

For the Buddhist, the experience responsible for the present suffering may belong even to the past births. The Christian version of it, however, may be that it may belong even to the past generations. This is the basic principle behind the Christian understanding of the original sin committed by the first parents of the humankind, due to which the subsequent generations are subjected to all sort of sufferings, including death. It was, however, remedied by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, God incarnate. Thus, whereas the sufferings (*duhkha*) of man are traced to the destructive act of the original sin of the first parents, his wellbeing (*sukha*) is traced to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. That is, both the negative and positive aspects of human experiences, including the destructive and constructive tendencies (*vasanas* or *samskaras*) in him, have their roots not only in his personal unconscious, but also in the collective unconscious postulated by modern psychologists like C. G. Jung and Sigmund Freud. My present sufferings and evil dispositions have their origin partially and immediately in the evil experiences, including my sinful acts, of the early part of my life, but fully and ultimately in the original sin of the first parents. Similarly, my present wellbeing and positive dispositions are rooted partly and immediately in the good experiences and virtuous acts of the early part of my life, but fully and ultimately in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

> If it is certain that through one man's fall so many died, it is even more certain that divine grace coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, comes to so many as an abundant free gift... If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life… Again, as the man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous (Rom. 5:15-20; see also 1 Cor. 15:20-28).

Thus, my present life, including its positive and negative aspects, is the fruit of the seeds of the experiences sown in the past, partly in the personal unconscious and partly in the collective unconscious. The latter is, according to psychologists, the common psyche of humankind, the universal man. As each individual should become enlightened with regard to his personal unconscious, so, in and through the same process of personal enlightenment, the whole humanity becomes and should become enlightened with regard to the collective unconscious, eventually resulting in the emergence of the new creation – the new earth and the new heaven (Rev. 21:1) – with God becoming all in all (1 Cor. 15:29), when we become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself" (Eph. 4:13), and "we grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is filled and joined together..." (Eph. 4:16). Thus, the whole universe, including human beings, along with the entire psycho-physical reality, becomes the cosmic body of Christ, "the fullness of him who fills the whole creation" (Eph. 1:23).

4. "This Shifting World"

This world and what it offers cannot satisfy the human spirit in search of liberation or realisation. Why? "All is impermanent [*anitya*]," said the Buddha again. Indeed, it is a shifting world, according to him. Nothing in the world lasts for more than a moment, neither the human beings nor the non-human. Every being, including myself, comes into being, exists and ceases to be the same moment. Consequently, every moment the reality before me is different, even new. It is like watching the flowing water at any point in a river. At any given moment, the water there is not the same as before, although one may feel the other way round. Every moment the water at the given point is quite different! This is true of the empirical world at large and all that belongs to it. All is transitory. "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities. All is vanity" (Eccles. 1:2).

Explaining further the idea of impermanence, the Buddha says: "All is momentary [*kshanika*]." This is the Buddhist *kshanika-vada*, the theory of momentariness. Apart from the fleeting character of the world and the worldly experiences, the momentariness, especially from the Christian point of view, refers to the creatures' continuous and total dependence on the creator God. To the question whether I will live one more moment, the immediate answer would be, "I don't know." But I may rightly add that I will live one or many more moments provided God would give me continued existence. Life at every moment is a gift of God and, therefore, for life of even a moment I depend totally on Him. Neither the past nor the future is within my control: the past is gone totally out of hand, and the future is wholly uncertain. Hence, I have only the present moment at my disposal of which I must make sense and make the best use. Every moment, therefore, is so decisive that the entire future is going to depend on how I live now! Every moment is unique and irrevocable! As St. Augustine has rightly put it, "Fear the Lord who passes by you, showering blessings!"

That the empirical world is *anitya* and *kshanika* (impermanent and momentary) is in effect a commonplace knowledge of science. It refers to the dynamic and ever active nature of everything in the world. Nothing in the world is static. The matter and mind alike are ever active and in motion. The state of perfect stillness is an impossibility with regard to everything on earth. Everything in the mental as well as the physical world is moving so fast that we fail to realize the movement. Stillness is illusion, while movement is reality. To anyone looking at a point in a flowing river, the latter may appear to be static, while, in fact, it is fast moving, the water at that point being replaced by a fresh amount of water every moment. "No one can step into the same river twice," said the Greek philosophers. People watching a motion picture have the feeling that they have continuously the same image on the screen, though, in fact, it is a series of images passing before the eyes in so quick a succession that the viewers do not realize the movement! A fast rotating flame of fire gives the false impression that there is a full static circle of fire, and not a single brand. How rightly did Heraclitus say that the reality is a flux! The instant birth, existence and death of each momentary thing – physical as well as mental – reduces it to just an event so that the whole lot of empirical reality in the last analysis is nothing but a series (*vithi*) of events! Indeed, passing events! Thus, the empirical reality, the whole of it, even the tiniest particle of it, is fast moving, every moment giving way to a new world of matter and mind. How then can such an empirical world offer lasting satisfaction? Never! "You fool! This very night you will have to give up your life; then who will get all these things you have kept for yourself?" (Lk. 12:20). This warning of Jesus Christ has for a Buddhist a deeper implication than it would immediately appear to have.

"All is non-soul [*anatma*]," another statement of the Buddha, further elucidates the shifting character of the world. Construed as *nairatmya-vada* (theory of non-soul), it has been misunderstood as a denial of the soul's existence, which the Buddha never did. Instead, referring to the five psycho-physical factors, namely, *rupa* (matter), *vedana* (feeling), *samjna* (perception), *samskara* (disposition) and *vijnana* (consciousness), which, according to him, constitute the empirical human being, he said that they neither severally nor collectively are the soul (*atma*). They are each *anatma* (non-soul). His statement is not that there is no soul, but that none of those psycho-physical factors is the soul. Thus, far from denying the existence of soul, he was refusing to identify it with any of the psycho-physical factors and was warning the followers against mistaking any of them for the soul and clinging to it.

Initially, the Creator, from the Christian point of view, had planned the three levels of the created world – the matter, mind, and spirit – to be integrated into one another and to function in mutual harmony. But something disastrous, which the Christians call the original sin, occurred, as a result of which the original integrity and harmony were disturbed, and a state of conflict and opposition between the matter-mind composite, on the one side, and the soul, on the other, arose. The former in the Indian terminology is *prakrti* and the latter is *purusha*. The *prakrti*'s presumptuous assertion of independence against *purusha* is ego (*aham*), which *Samkhya* system has rightly recognised as a built-in characteristic of *prakrti*. This is the disorientation of the nature resulting from the original sin. It is in man that the *prakrti-purusha* (the nature-spirit) polarity is most acutely felt. There is the danger of mistaking the *aham* for *purusha*, ego (the false self) for soul (the real self). Hence, the Buddha's warning which Jesus Christ has reiterated: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself [i.e., the ego]... for anyone who wants to save his life [i.e., the ego] will lose it [i.e., the soul], but anyone who loses his life [i.e., the ego] for my sake will find it [i.e., the soul]" (Mt. 16:24-25).

Looking at the shifting character of the world, the Buddha once again said: "All is an aggregate [*samghata* or *skandha*]." That is, everything in the empirical world of matter and mind is a collection of many factors. None of them is in its identity (*sva-lakshana*), but each of them is mixed with many others (*samanya-lakshana*). We have already made mention of the psycho-physical factors making up man as an empirical being; *rupa*, *vedana*, *samjna*, *samskara*, and *vijnana*. A closer look at them will reveal that they are the factors that constitute not only the human being but also the entire empirical reality – the *prakrti*, the nature. The Buddha says that they are each a common name standing respectively for the aggregate of matter, feelings, perceptions, dispositions, and consciousness. Take, for example, the tiniest possible particle of matter. If not an aggregate of different elements, it is certainly an aggregate of so many subatomic particles. The mater in its simplest or purest form (*sva-lakshana*, self-defined) is not ever available, says the Buddhist. So, too, are the psychic factors like feelings and dispositions. We may mention one or another feeling such as joy, anger, love, and so on. But, in fact, there is no single moment when we have just a single feeling exclusively. For example, even when we are angry, along with it, there are also other feelings, expressed or unexpressed, with reference to the same object or different objects, such as love, fear, hope, compassion, etc. Thus, at any given moment, the matter and the mind are an aggregate of different factors: either a heap of loose elements or elementals or a bundle of passions and emotions. Solidity or substantiality in this sense is a myth, a category mistake. "You are dust and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19), God said to man in the beginning. Everything available in this world is fluid and insubstantial (*anatma*) and, therefore, shifting.

The Buddhist asks: "What is a chariot?" It is neither the pole, nor the axle, nor the wheels, nor the rains, nor the yoke, nor the spokes, nor the goad, taken singly. A chariot rather is an aggregate of all those component parts. Similarly, the empirical reality – constituted by matter and the mind – is invariably an aggregate of so many constituent parts, not the thing-in-itself. Everyone trusting in the empirical world "will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!" (Mt. 7:27). In other words, we have never anything – material or mental – in its pure, unmixed, simple form. The thing-in-itself (*sva-lakshana*) is never the object of experience: it is incomprehensible and ineffable. This is the mystery of the created world! But a still greater mystery is that there is nothing that is outside God's plans and providence! He is in full control and knowledge of all things – the most complex as well as the simplest. "Not one [sparrow] is forgotten in God's sight. Why, every hair on your head has been counted" (Lk. 12:7). In Psalm 139, the inspired poet beautifully pours out the finest sentiments of admiration at God's meticulous care and unfailing providence even for the tiniest of particles of matter and the innermost movements of mind.

5. "In a Devout and Confident Spirit"

It may be noted that the Buddha concentrates on the empirical reality and describes it as *duhkha*, *anitya*, *kshanika*, *anatma*, and *samghata*; he goes by empirical methods of investigation; he refuses to speak of God both positively and negatively; he dismisses the ultimate questions as unanswerable (*avyakrta-vastuni*). As a result, he is often presented as a pessimist, rationalist if not an empiricist, an agnostic, or even an atheist. But this is a gross misunderstanding of the Buddha and his teachings.

Correcting it, Vatican Council II rightly refers to the "devout and confident spirit" that the Buddha instilled into his followers. Both these qualifications – "devout" and "confident" – are significant, for while the former, on the one hand, asserts the religious and metaphysical character of Buddhism and, on the other, refutes the criticism that it is rationalistic, empirical, and agnostic or atheistic; the latter refers to Buddhism not as a pessimism but as an optimism. The pessimism, anti-metaphysical stand, and non-religiosity of Buddhism are only apparent while deep down it is optimistic, metaphysical, and religious. All the same, its immediate concerns are more practical than theoretical and it urgently addresses the practical issues of life, keeping the theoretical ones for a more leisurely time and treatment. May be in the Buddha's view, for various practical considerations, orthopraxis took precedence over orthodoxy.

To start with, to be aware of suffering as a fact of life and to accept it as such is not necessarily pessimism. It would remain pessimism if it stopped short at the discovery that all is suffering. But Buddhism does not stop there; instead, it further proposes effective means of alleviating it once for all. Therefore, the Buddhist recognition that all is suffering is an expression of realism, rather than one of pessimism.

The Buddhist approach to suffering is characterised by the cool of a clever physician confronting an illness. He knows that an illness is a fact of life, which can be diagnosed, treated, and cured, and, therefore, seeing it he is neither upset nor puzzled, but keeps his cool and behaves with composure. Similarly, the human suffering does not take the Buddhist by surprise. For him suffering is neither a mystery nor a problem. Instead, he understands it as a fact, a painful fact though, and then he coolly but successfully employs the means to remedy it. In fact, the Buddha has been compared to a physician who diagnosed the illness of human existence as suffering, identified its cause as craving (*trishna*), discovered that the illness was curable, and prescribed a medicine, namely, the eightfold path (*ashtanga-marga*).

Again, the Buddhist approach to suffering is through and through a practical one. The Buddha's position was rather that speculations about metaphysical and supernatural realities are of no immediate use for man in curing the illness of suffering. To cure it one should eradicate its root cause, which is within oneself, namely, the craving. So one must immediately start employing the means to stop the craving. Once the craving is stopped, and the suffering removed, then the light of *nirvana* will at once dawn on you, in which the metaphysical and supernatural questions will be settled by themselves.

Description of the empirical reality in terms of *duhkha*, *anitya*, *kshanika*, and *anatma* for the Buddhist is not to depress the human spirit but to elevate it. Listening to the same description, one develops a sense of mystery, on the one hand, refusing to accept this world as it appears to the naked eyes, and, on the other, unable to grasp or articulate it as it is! One is also on one's guard against the temptation to mistake it for something permanent and substantial. While the awareness that it is insubstantial or non-soul (*anatma*) makes one disinterested in the attractions of the world, that it is transitory helps one to keep one's cool in the face of all experiences, pleasant as well as unpleasant. The experience, no matter whether it is pleasant or unpleasant will soon pass and, therefore, it is no use taking it seriously, either being elated or feeling depressed! One, thus, learns the art of keeping one's cool in all places, at all times, and under all circumstances, and it is the dawning of enlightenment (*bodhi*).

Again, a Buddhist does not leave the picture of the empirical world as a heap of discrete and disorderly entities and events, arousing pessimism and disgust. Even the theory of momentariness is given a more positive content in terms of dynamism and movement. This was a Buddhist insight that corrected the then prevalent Upanishadic view of reality as static and even dead. For the latter, there are only two categories of thought: *sat* (being) or *asat* (non-being). A thing is either *sat* (being) or *asat* (non-being). Correcting it, the Buddhist says that the thing is neither *sat* nor *asat*, but *bhava* (becoming). Between the momentary events of things there is a continuity based on the causal relationship called *pratitya-samut-pada* (dependent origination). Every event or thing, momentary as it is, occurs depending on and determined by the previous one. The content of each moment is carried over to the next one, and to that extent the two moments are identical, but the second one having its own characteristics, due either to the new circumstances or to the free decision of the being concerned, has a richer content and is, thus, an improvement on the previous one: it has *become* a new one. Thus, the given being goes on becoming ever newer and newer. This is the Buddhist optimism. The present, although it is the product of the past, can take or be given a new direction and, thus, the whole future can be controlled. There is, thus, no rigid determinism. The human being, even as he has inherited the past, by free personal decisions can change the quality of life and take a new direction to become more and more realized and enlightened a person. He can change and become as pure as a child (Mt. 18:1-4) and as perfect as God the Father (Mt. 5:48).

6. "A State of Absolute Freedom"

The Buddha did not despair at the observation of the fact of suffering. Applying the causal principle of dependent origination he was convinced that there should be something depending on which suffering originates, and stopping which suffering also can be stopped with the result that one reaches a state of absolute freedom called *nirvana.*

The Buddha's diagnosis led to the discovery that suffering in any form is only a symptom of a deeper illness, mainly, *trishna* (desire or craving). That is, suffering is the effect, the cause being *trishna.* This is known as *samudaya-satya*, the truth about the origin of suffering. Then, in order to eliminate suffering, the *trishna* should be stopped. Indeed, it can be stopped which the Buddha has put forward as the *nirodha-satya*, the truth about the stopping of suffering. A human state of existence, which is rid of *trishna* and the consequent *duhkha*, is itself *nirvana*, and it is the opposite of the empirical existence called *samsara.*

Nirvana, thus, is the counterpart of the Hindu *moksha* or *mukti* (liberation). The word *nirvana* means "blowing out" a flame of fire. The flame being blown out there results calm and cool. The Buddhist says that man is on the fire of passions and emotions, which are invariably one or other form of desire (*trishna*); the mental state of calm and cool resulting from the quenching of the fire of passions and emotions is the experience of *nirvana.*

What could it mean that desire is the cause of suffering? Is it true that all kinds of desire without exception would cause suffering? Yes, indeed, the desire in any form not only causes suffering but is itself suffering. For a desire necessarily implies that I do not yet have the thing that I desire for. To desire for a thing that I already have is irrelevant. Hence, a desire means the absence of the object concerned: it results in emptiness, a void, which necessarily causes restlessness or dissatisfaction, which, in effect, is suffering. Therefore, it is plain that to realize *nirvana* all sorts of desire should go and one should attain a state of desirelessness, i.e., no desire whatsoever should be left!

One may wonder whether such a state of total desirelessness is possible at all! Should not one at least have the desire to be desireless to realize *nirvana*? In search of an answer, we may first of all say that the proposed state of total desirelessness is a goal or ideal that is not yet realized, but to be gradually realized. For that, one may start classifying the desires into different groups. First, there are the unhealthy (*akusala*) desires, for instance, the hatred (wishing evil for another person). They are unhealthy in the sense that as long as one entertains such thoughts, one is disturbed in mind, which may cause ill-health in the body, too. Additionally, especially for a Christian disciple, hatred being a sin, it is an illness in the spirit, too. Thus, the desire in the form of hatred is, on the one hand, no use and, on the other, causes ill-health in body, mind, and spirit alike, and, therefore, should be given up. Of course, one should neither suppress it nor act accordingly. Instead, through reasoning, rationalisation, consultation, and prayer for divine assistance, one shall become convinced of its being a cause of ill-health – that it is an unhealthy desire – and shall work towards freely giving it up and, thus, managing it and all such other unhealthy desires. A second group of desires is the unrealistic ones such as too high and, therefore, unattainable plans and projects. They, too, if entertained, can only cause restlessness and eventually disappointments. So, again, with the conviction that they are useless and harmful, one should freely give them up. Finally, there will remain only such desires that are healthy (*kusala*) and attainable. All desires to be good and to do good fall under this group. They should be managed neither by suppressing nor by giving them up, but by realizing them. However, as they may be many, realizing them one by one, one's whole lifetime may not be enough! Yet, they can be brought under a single desire – the desire for God, to put it in a Christian way. God being the *summum bonum*, desire for Him would include the desire for good in any form; realization of the desire for God, therefore, would satisfy all the desires for good so that there would not be any more desire left unrealized. In other words, realisation of the desire for God would put an end to all desires, and it will be the state of desirelessness, *nirvana*, the state of absolute freedom from passions and emotions.

In fact, there is no human being who does not have the desire for God. All men and women invariably do have it, as St. Augustine has beautifully stated: "God, you have created us for Yourself; and, therefore, our hearts are restless until they find rest in You!" In the heart of hearts, every human being naturally has the desire for God, the rightful Owner and Master. Of course, there are people who do not recognise this desire for God. Some others may take to wrong ways and means for satisfying the desire for God. For example, they may relentlessly run after riches and possessions, name and fame! The desire for God, however, cannot be satisfied by anything but by God Himself. Hence, the Buddhist-Christian dictum that everyone should stop the desire for anything that is not God, and strive to realize the desire for God. "God alone suffices," says the great mystic St. Theresa of Avila.

7. "Supreme Enlightenment"

The goal of life, according to Buddhism, is also called enlightenment (*bodhi*). The word *bodhi* is synonymous with *nirvana* and speaks of the other side of the reality of final realization. While *nirvana* refers to it rather negatively as a state of freedom from passions and emotions, *bodhi* refers to its positive aspect as an awakening of consciousness. The *bodhi* (enlightenment) is said to be the greatest attainment of S*iddhartha Gautama*, who, as a result, came to be called the Buddha, the enlightened. Thus, *bodhi* and *nirvana* are the positive and negative aspects of human perfection: the former referring to the attainment of wisdom (*prajna*) and the latter to the destruction or "blowing out" of all passions in the human being. These are so identified with each other that they take place simultaneously. One cannot have the enlightenment without totally getting rid of all passions, summarised as *trishna* (desire), and *vice versa.* So, as soon as the fire of passion is put out, the enlightenment necessarily dawns.

The basic presupposition in Buddhism, and in all Indian religions for that matter, holds that ignorance (*avidya*) is the predicament of human existence as long as it remains within the state of *samsara.* According to them, it is out of ignorance that a human being wanders away from his/her goal and keeps him/herself enslaved in the realm of *samsara.* Similarity, being blinded by ignorance one mistakes wrong for right, and evil for good. When the Upanishadic sages prayed, "Lead me form darkness to light [*tamaso ma jyotir-gamaya*]," they were yearning to be led from the darkness of ignorance to the light of enlightened consciousness.

It is true that the Buddha started with the observation that all experiences in this world are, in the last analysis, suffering. He immediately added that the cause of suffering is desire mostly for the objects or pleasures in this world, and that man entertains such desires because of his ignorance as to distinguish between what is ultimately real and unreal, what is permanent and impermanent, and so on. Thus, the Buddha traced all misfortunes of human existence ultimately to ignorance. This is the reason why ignorance (*avidya* or *ajnana*) appears to be the first of the twelve factors (*nidanas*) accounting for one's *samsaric* existence, according to Buddhism.

Thus, ignorance being the fundamental cause of *samsara*, the cycle of birth and death, the means for liberation from it is naturally knowledge (*prajna*). It is called the enlightenment of consciousness (*bodhi*). In fact, while the state of *samsara* is identified with ignorance, that of liberation is identified with the awakening of consciousness. It was such an enlightenment that Siddhartha Gautama claimed to have achieved as a result of his continued and prolonged meditation. Referring to the experience of enlightenment, he later said: "Ignorance was dispelled, wisdom arose; darkness was dispelled, light arose!" That is, what happened to him was a transformation of mind: from ignorance to wisdom, from darkness to light. Consequently, he claimed to have been able to see everything as it was, in the right perspective, not through concepts but intuitively: i.e., he became a man of wisdom (*prajna*) and insight (*vipassana*).

It was on the basis of his awakened consciousness or the enlightened personality that the Buddha claimed to be an authentic teacher and demanded to be heard. This was evident in the way he approached his first audience, which consisted of the five monks who had long left his company, accusing him of going lax in ascetical practices. Now, seeing the same Gautama coming back to them, they naturally did not feel like taking notice of him, still less like listening to him. Instead, they were resolved to treat him with scorn and contempt. As he came closer, however, they could not resist the force of his "awakened" personality so much so that, as if prompted by an inner voice, they greeted him and showed him signs of respect due to a fellow monk. They addressed him by name, and called him "friend." But to their surprise, Gautama protested at this point. He refused to be called a friend and to be treated as a fellow monk. He said: "Monks, you should not any longer call me by name, nor treat me like a friend, for now I am an *arhat, a tathagata*, a fully enlightened one. I shall teach you the *dharma*. If you accept it, you too will attain enlightenment."

Another Buddhist conviction is that the Buddhahood or enlightenment is open to all human beings, who take the pains to walk through the path shown by the Buddha. The enlightenment (*bodhi*) attained by Gautama is not considered his exclusive right or monopoly, but a possibility open to all human beings. Every individual, therefore, is a potential Buddha, called to enlightenment. The Buddha did not claim to be God or a divine personality. He rather presented himself as just one among the human beings, who, through proper efforts, attained enlightenment – an experience he recommended for all. He also suggested a path, the *ashtanga-marga*, which he said would surely lead any earnest human being to the same enlightenment.

8. "By Their Own Efforts"

This expression is a reference to two different emphases in the Buddhist tradition. For the Buddha and his early followers, the emphasis was on human efforts in view of *nirvana* or *bodhi*. It is well known that the Buddha hardly made any mention of God coming to human assistance in his/her spiritual pursuit. For him, as far as his explicit statements go, what matters is human efforts. It may be noted that he started his search for truth by rejecting the Hindu sacrifices and rituals. He found them empty and meaningless. Even the extreme sort of Hindu asceticism was not acceptable to him. He came to the conclusion that it is neither sacrifice nor worship nor self-torture that leads one to the final enlightenment.

As a matter of fact, the Buddha wisely avoided the very question of God. He did not claim to be God himself. He did not preach a God worthy of human worship. All he did was to show a path, which he said would definitely lead one to enlightenment. He did not ask his disciples to trust in God, nor even in himself, as Christ asked His disciples. Instead, the Buddha asked his disciples to trust in themselves: "… be ye lamps for yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Seek salvation alone in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one besides yourselves" (*Mahapari-nibhana Sutta*). Thus, Buddhism, as the Buddha envisaged it, does not at all entertain the hope that one's efforts towards enlightenment shall be blessed by God who can be led to do so by offering worship. Instead, every individual works out his/her salvation him/herself, through self-reliance, as neither by the grace of God nor under of an external authority like a *guru*, who can only show the path. Therefore, the Buddha insisted that his listeners should not accept even his own teaching without testing it for themselves. Thus, in early Buddhism, the emphasis was more on self-reliance.

9. "… Or by Higher Assistance"

The stress on self-reliance was gradually toned down, paving the way for another line of thinking which provided for "higher assistance" to human being, complementing, if not replacing, one's efforts. The Buddha's disciples soon started deifying and worshipping him. It happened formally in *Mahayana* schools. In *Hinayana* schools, too, especially in countries like Tibet, Burma, and Sri Lanka, there have always been rituals and practices, which for all practical purposes are acts of worshipping the Buddha. Then, the belief that the Buddha is an *avatar* of the Absolute gradually became commonly accepted in the *Hinayana* circles by a kind of popular movement, and in the *Mahayana* circles by the work of professional thinkers. The acceptance of the Buddha as an *avatar* by later Hinduism made the development of Buddhology easier and quicker.

Belief in the pre-existence of the Buddha was first expressed in the famous *jataka* stories. Initially they spoke only of the many previous births and lives of Siddhartha Gautama, not as God but as an individual being. There could be similar stories about any other human beings who are believed to go through many births and deaths. Increasing faith in the divinity and absoluteness of the Buddha, however, resulted in the stories describing the miraculous circumstances of the Buddha's conception and birth: he selects the time and place of his birth, his mother, and the family. His mother Maya conceives him miraculously without the knowledge of her husband, and he is born in an unusual manner. Wise men from far off places visit the child and predict his future glory as the Buddha. All these have similarity with the descriptions of Jesus' birth and infancy as we find in the 'Infancy Narratives' in the New Testament.

The doctrine of three bodies (*tri-kaya*) of the Buddha is clearly an attempt to construct a Buddhology on Christological lines, perhaps even under Christian influence. The three bodies are, *dharma-kaya* (the transcendent body), *nirmana-kaya* (the historical body), and the *sambhoga-kaya* (the celestial body). They represent, respectively, the Buddha the transcendent being, his historical incarnation, and his glorious existence in heaven.

The development of the idea of Bodhisattva is very much in tune with the idea of a saviour God. A Bodhisattva is one who has already attained the enlightenment, the *nirvana*. He does not disappear from this world, but chooses to continue to live on earth so that he may help others attain *nirvana*. That is, he prolongs his life on earth not for himself but for the benefit of others, and he does so out of compassion (*karuna*) for his fellow-humans. The 4th century (AD) Pure Land Buddhism (belonging to the *Mahayana* tradition) of China believes that one's merit can be transferred to others. According to this tradition, a Bodhisattva can share his merits with others who place their trust in him. Salvation, then, does not depend merely on one's own power and attainment, but on the power of another, too. The central figure of the devotion here is *Amitabha*, the Buddha of infinite light, who transports devotees to the Pure Land of freedom and enlightenment.

10. Conclusion

According to the Buddhist path, human beings with a devout and confident spirit can not only go beyond this shifting is radically insufficient world, but also realize absolute freedom and enlightenment. This way of enlightenment is also a way of perfection, integration, and wholeness. To conclude, therefore, let me recall a few general observations that I have made in my earlier work, *Comparative Theology*:

> … [T]he Buddhist way is for the most part a psychotherapy. This is quite understandable, indeed, for, according to the Buddhist diagnosis, the basic illness of man is mental, namely, that his mind is badly determined and controlled by the unhealthy factors generating in him restlessness, tension, anxiety, etc., as a result of which he is unable to behave himself as a mature man. Therefore, what the Buddhist way offers is 'to give sight and knowledge, and it tends to calm, to insight, enlightenment, *nibbana*,' to use the Buddha's own terminology.
>
> … [T]he Buddhist way is significantly called "the middle path" (*Majjhima-patipada*), for avoiding the two extremes – indulgence in sensuality, on the one hand, and insistence on excessive austerities, on the other – the Buddha has taken a middle course between them. He has made it clear in the very first of his sermons, which he opened as follows: "These two extremes, oh! monks, are not to be practised by one who has gone forth from the world [i.e., a monk]. What are the two? That associated with passions, low, vulgar, common, ignoble, and useless, and that associated with self-torture, ignoble, and useless. Avoiding these two extremes, the *tathagata* [the thus arrived, which refers to the Buddha himself] has gained the knowledge of the middle path, which gives sight and knowledge, and tends to calm, to insight, enlightenment, *nibbana*" (*Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-sutta*).
>
> The Buddha, then, continued to explain the 'middle path', which consists of right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. What strikes us most in this list of the basic principles

of Buddhist life is the word 'right' (*samyak*) prefixed to each of them. This word refers to the rightness, correctness, integrity, and wholeness of an action. This shows that the Buddha's insistence was on the rightness, correctness, integrity, and wholeness of human thoughts, words, and deeds. That is, one should be able to look at and accept things, people, and events as they are, to face them with equanimity and to respond to them with composure. Therefore, what matters ultimately is not a set of dos and don'ts, but the right (*samyak*) attitudes. Thus, the Buddhist way seeks to form realistic personalities, neither eccentrics nor fanatics. In fact, it is in this sense that the Buddhist way is a middle path: it aims at balanced personalities.[2]

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[2] Thomas Kochumuttom, *Comparative Theology*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1985, 136-37.

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LANGUAGE AND TRUTH IN GOD-TALK VIS-À-VIS GOD-EXPERIENCE

Jose Nandhikkara◆

1. Introduction

This is a review article on *The Experience of God: Icons of the Mystery*, written by Raimon Panikkar and translated by Joseph Cunneen from *L'Experience de dieu: Icons du mistere*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006. The book, according to Panikkar himself, grew out of a week of conferences he gave to theology professors at the Benedictine monastery of Silos. I take this well written book as "something for a philosophical treatment,"[1] after Wittgenstein, as it inspired me to thoughts of my own. We experience more than we can speak about and we speak about more than we could systematise. Experience and language, belief and practice, though distinct, are inseparable. They get their significance and meaning only in the stream of life. It is not the question of what they are in themselves, but what lies around them, the hurly-burly of our ordinary life that gives them their value in our lives. God-experience and God-talk, though unique, are also interwoven in the stream of life giving ultimate meaning and purpose for our being human. Panikkar sees the fundamental relations between God, human and world and presents a cosmotheandric vision of reality in this work. It is a religious view of life, showing the universality and fundamental nature of the religious dimension of human life. Reality, according to Panikkar, is non-dual and Trinitarian. God, human, and world are neither one nor two nor three; they form a unity in diversity. In his meditations, he mediates between the Trinitarian view of God and the advaitic view of reality.

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[1] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953, 254.

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2. Speaking of God

The first chapter, 'Speaking of God', elaborates nine propositions that show that our God-talk is not a discourse about an object, but about the meaning of life. It (1) requires a preliminary interior silence, (2) has its own style, (3) includes our whole being, (4) regards God alone, (5) needs the mediation of a belief, (6) regards symbol and not concept, (7) includes several meanings, (8) does not exhaust the divine, and (9) leads back to a new silence. Placing himself in the apophatic tradition, Panikkar says: "To pretend to limit, define, or comprehend God is in itself a contradictory effort, since its achievement would be a creation of the mind, a creature" (18). The experience of God is ineffable and no one can describe it adequately. Panikkar reiterates the classical Christian distinction between *credere in Deum* "to believe in God" (opening to the mystery), *credere Deo* "to believe God" (to have confidence in what a Supreme Being has said), and *credere Deum* "to believe that God is" (to believe in God's existence) (30).

Panikkar is well aware of the fact that, in our God-talk, the very word 'God' is problematic, though he consoles himself that we cannot avoid employing one word or another. God is not an object; God is not a being, nor even the Supreme Being. That does not mean God does not exist. It just means that 'God' does not mean something in the way that a name refers to an object. The name and object formula is neither sufficient nor necessary for referring to the reality of God. In fact, the search for an object that stands for 'God' is the result of ignorance regarding both the reality of God and the use of the word 'God' in religious forms of life. It is the deep-seated philosophical prejudice that bewitches us to treat all words as names referring to objects. There are numerous ways of understanding the word God, and no one use has a monopoly on its meaning. God-talk is part of human language use and forms a kind of unity from a varied and interconnected complex network of different languages. All are not of equal value, but they overlap and crisscross, witnessing and contributing to the richness of religious experience, shedding light both on the mystery of God, human being, and the world. It is to be reminded that we do not use a special language in our God-talk. What I learn from Panikkar and Wittgenstein is that one has to take the experience of God as something fundamental and resist temptations to explain it or to reduce it to something else for which a philosophical or scientific point of view is capable of providing an answer. The experience of God is something fundamental for believers not because of any epistemic or phenomenological property, but by virtue of the place it occupies in their lives.

The experience of God is not the experience of an object. There is no object God of which we can have the experience. God-experiences are, by nature, not available for empirical verification. That does not mean that they are not real. As in other matters of philosophy, though hard to achieve, realism but not empiricism[2] is the noble goal in our God-talk. One is reminded of Wittgenstein's injunction in the *Tractatus*: "What can be said at all be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence."[3] In fact, Panikkar concludes his meditations pointing to silence as a privileged 'place' to meet God. He quotes from *Brihadaranyka Upanishad*: "Let the wise man practise wisdom and not launch into long speeches that are mere empty words" (IV.4.21). What, then, is the justification for Panikkar to launch into long speeches rather than practise silence?

Panikkar seems to be following Augustine's injunction: "*Et vae tacentibus de te quoniam loquaces muti sunt.*"[4] The attitude of later Wittgenstein was also similar: "don't for heaven's sake, be afraid of talking nonsense! Only don't fail to pay attention to your nonsense."[5] In Wittgenstein's terms, we use pictures in our God-talk. To contemplate God and to speak about God, we use *our* pictures, pictures from a human point of view. Wittgenstein observed: "… even the hugest telescope has to have an eye-piece no larger than the human eye."[6] These pictures are from our lives in the world and they are seen from a religious point of view so that they correspond to the experience of God. These pictures depend upon human perspectives. However, "The picture has to be used in an entirely different way,"[7] in a religious way. Panikkar seems to be closer to this tradition in presenting the meditations on the icons of the mystery, with love and care. Icons are symbolic and imaginative representations and not sensible reproductions. They are pictures used by believers in religious ways, with faith and love. Panikkar speaks from his heart, from his deep personal experiences, more like a sage and a prophet. This is a challenging and stimulating work inviting the readers to deeper levels of a universal and unique experience: The Experience of God.

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[2] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, eds. G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees, and G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978, 325.

[3] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden, London: Routledge, 1922, 7.

[4] Augustine, *Confessions* 1.4. Woe to those who say nothing concerning thee just because the chatterboxes talk a lot of nonsense.

[5] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998, 64.

[6] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 17.

[7] Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. C. Barrett, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966, 63.

3. The Experience of God

The second chapter, titled 'The Experience of God', begins with a sketch of "silence of life," described as the "art of making silent the activities of life that are not life itself in order to reach the pure experience of life" (24). Life is not to be equated with the activities of life. According to Panikkar, the experience of God includes four distinct but inseparable moments: The pure experience, the memory of that moment, our interpretation of it in our language, and its reception in the cultural world. Experience (E) is, then, a combination of personal experience (e), conveyed by our memory (m), modelled by our imagination (i), and conditioned by its reception (r) in the cultural context of our time, i.e., E=e.m.i.r. Each culture offers us the environment of intelligibility in which things and events take on meaning. God-experience also takes place in a cultural environment. It is religion that gives the ultimate content to culture so much so that Panikkar affirms: "there is no religion without culture and no culture without religion" (27). Wittgenstein draws a sketch on how a child is initiated into a culture and beliefs: "The child learns to believe a host of things. I.e., it learns to act according to these beliefs. Bit by bit there forms a system of what is believed, and in that system some things stand unshakeably fast and some are more or less liable to shift. What stands fast does so, not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing; it is rather held fast by what lies around it."[8] Belief in God, experience of God and speaking of God also are learned by a believer, bit by bit as a result of nurture and culture.

Religion is a constitutive dimension of being human and the experience of God nourishes men and women. Human beings are fully human only from the moment that they experience their ultimate foundation, what they really are. Inasmuch as it is ultimate experience, the experience of God is one that is not only possible but even necessary for all human beings to arrive at the awareness of their own identity. It is the

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[8] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, eds. G. E M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969, 144.

intimor intimo meo, to speak as Saint Augustine, "the most intimate aspect of myself," what is most interior to me, what I most truly am, and what then, precisely, opens me to others (45). The function of divinity, according to Panikkar, is to confer an ultimate frame of reference. "Divinity is the plenitude of the human heart, the real destiny of humanity, the guide of all peoples, the beloved of mystics, the lord of history, the complete realization of what we really are" (35). The ultimate questions regarding meaning and purpose of life are related to belief in God: "To believe in a God means to understand the question about the meaning of life. To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter. To believe in God means to see that life has a meaning."[9] Belief in God is not primarily a cognitive act, a matter for our reason but a form of life. Though the experience of God generally occurs through the mediation of a belief, they are not identical. God-experience, religious beliefs and practices are interwoven in the stream of life and it is the life of the believer that gives significance and meaning to them and they, in turn, give meaning and purpose to human life.

We are able to situate divinity beyond the universe or in its own centre, in the depths of the human (our intellect or our heart), or, quite simply, nowhere. Panikkar proposes a cosmotheandric vision of reality that does not divide reality into matter and spirit. His vision is unique as he does not sacrifice the matter on the altar of the spirit (idealistic spiritualities of all kinds), nor the spirit on the altar of the matter (empiricist materialisms of all kinds). In this advaitic vision, the word is alive in the world of the spirit, thought influences matter, the senses are spiritual, the divine is incarnated, and the human is impregnated with divinity (48). The experience of God, according to Panikkar's cosmotheandric vision, is the root of all experience. It is the source, centre and limit of all human experiences and of each of them. In our day-to-day experiences such as eating, drinking, sleeping, loving, working, etc., we discover the experience of God. The world of a mystic is categorically different from that of others; it is not an empirical difference but in the way the mystic lives. The mystic constantly lives in the presence of God. God-experience is not just one of the experiences beside others; it is beneath every experience and makes us human. Through this experience, we come to recognize that we are in the interior of something that includes everything. The experience of God requires all our being and our whole being; it occurs in and with the totality of reality. We are not like fish in the water, but a water drop in the ocean of reality. God is not just the *intimor intimo meo* but I am *intimo Deo*.

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[9] Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961, 74.

A well-defined initiation is the normal path to the experience of God. We have a need of genuine masters – fathers, mothers, teachers, elders, priests, and mystics – who can initiate their fellow human beings into the experience of God. Initiation is personal and the experience of God is also personal. The way is unique for each pilgrim. Wittgenstein wrote perceptively:

> ... [I]nstructing in a religious belief would have to be portraying, describing that system of reference & at the same time appealing to the conscience. And these together would have to result finally in the one under instruction himself, of his own accord, passionately taking up that system of reference. It would be as though someone were on the one hand to let me see my hopeless situation, on the other depict the rescue-anchor, until of my own accord, or at any rate not led by the hand by the instructor, I were to rush up & seize it.[10]

Neither do all people see the situation religiously nor do they rush up and seize the rescue-anchor, nor do they go to the same rescue-anchor. In answer to the question 'Why do you find these significant?' a believer typically narrates a personal story. Here giving examples and telling stories are not an indirect means of explaining – in default of a better. In the end, however, they can only reiterate their reaction and say that it is because they are significant. Initiation begins with the step from bios to zoe, from pure physical-chemical biology to humanly conscious life. It is then that human life, properly speaking, begins (53). We are human, that is a living being more than a species of animal, precisely through that initiation that renders us, in scholastic terms, *capax Dei*.

4. Christian Experience of God

In the third chapter, titled, "Christian Experience of God," Panikkar boldly claims that many possible experiences of the divine mystery would have the right to call themselves Christian. The title of the chapter has no definite article because he does not claim to describe *the* Christian experience of God. It is puzzling, however, in the context of the title of the book, *The Experience of God*, which was also the title of the second chapter of the book. How could Panikkar justify himself using the definite article for 'Experience of God' but not for the 'Christian Experience of God'? He also does not add the indefinite article, "for it is not a question of *one* – and only *one* experience among all those that are possible" (61). Though there are a number of ways to have Christian Experience of God, they are to be connected with the faith in Jesus Christ. I agree with Panikkar that Christianity should not be reduced to a historical religion and a religion of the book, but it cannot live without those historical roots. Though the Gospels are not merely historical records, and the Christian faith transcends historical facts, the Gospels and other New Testament writings are normative for Christian faith and the Christian experience of God. Panikkar's fascination for the universality of Christian experience of God waters down its uniqueness.

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[10] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 73.

Panikkar, an *acharya* in interreligious dialogue, rightly affirms: "One of the most urgent tasks of the world today is the establishment of bridges between different religions" (28). The experience of God cannot be monopolized by any religion or any system of thought. Each religion should express its uniqueness in its complete integrity. "The Unknown Christ of Hinduism,"[11] Panikkar clarifies, was not the Christ known to the Christians and unknown by the Hindus. In his view, there are other aspects of the Christic mystery that Christians do not know, and that the Hindus know under another name. The formula of John, "Christ is the *alpha* and the *omega*," implies that Christ is *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma*, *delta*, all the way to *omega*: he is all. This is, however, a confession of faith; and one who makes this faith is a Christian. Here, Christian faith transcends its juridical, doctrinal, and historical limits. It is to be emphasized, at the same time, that there cannot be a Christian faith without these and similar elements. These are boundaries and bonds. In our eagerness to find similarities, we shall not forget the differences among various ways of being Christian. I do not deny the fact that there are ways of belonging to Christ without belonging to the visible body of Christ. It is presumptuous and misleading from the part of Christians, however, to speak of "The Unknown Christ" of any other religious tradition. Though Panikkar admits that "In its own manner, each religion can profess a similar project, using their symbols and their denominations" (74), it will generate only a confusion of tongues

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[11] Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981.

(*Sprachverwirrung*), rather than a meaningful language-game (*Sprachspiel*). Dialogue partners are accepted and celebrated as they are and not in some 'foreign' terms. Cross fertilization and mutual fecundation do not necessarily bring forth healthy offspring. Panikkar's claim to be Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist, at the same time, is flawed. Christian experience of God is unique and universal. It is open to all cultures and traditions and takes different forms in expressions in different places and times.

As Panikkar observes, "This kind of 'ecumenical ecumenism' does not mean that each religion should resign itself to eat only one part of the great desert at the wedding of heaven and earth, and that every one should feel satisfied in his or her egoism. Ecumenism does not surrender the *totum*, the plenitude that each religion concretely promises, but is aware that one savours the *totum in parte*, the whole in one's particular part" (74-75). This shows that we should speak of 'the Christian Experience', accepting and celebrating each experience as singularly unique, neither superior nor inferior to any other. Each one is personal and particular, but with roots in the historical, juridical, doctrinal, and universal dimensions of the Christian Experience of God. The Christian Experience of God is unique and universal.

Christ is the parameter for Christian God-talk. Panikkar, however, urges us not to confuse Jesus with the Christ. Jesus is Christ, and he who confesses that Jesus is Christ obviously is a Christian (69). It is in and through Christ that Christians find themselves in harmony with all things, with all beings, and with all other men and women. It is Christ the only Son, the Firstborn, Head, Alpha and Omega, Logos from the beginning, through whom everything has been made and who bears everything, as the Christian scriptures declare. But this Christ is not identical with Jesus (69), Panikkar wants to clarify. For example, in the Eucharist, there is the presence of real Christ, but in the Eucharist there are not the proteins of Jesus, son of Mary. Communion is not cannibalism. The identification of Jesus of Nazareth, which permits us not to confuse him with anyone else, is not the same as his identity, the identity that would allow us to know him. To know a person's identity, one needs love and faith. To know the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, we must meet his person. If Christ is no more than an historic personage, the experience of the Christian is reduced to living the memory of his life, retransmitted by the memory that people have preserved of it. In that case, it is the experts who would have the greatest authority, and Christianity is thereby reduced to being a religion of the Book (70-71). However, as it was pointed out earlier, though distinct, we cannot separate historical Jesus and the Christ of Christian faith. The Christian experience of God is the experience of the risen Jesus, that is, living, *hic et nun* (here and now), yesterday, today, and always, to use the words of St. Paul.

The mystery of Incarnation cannot be separated from the mystery of Resurrection and both are fundamental to the Christian experience of God. Panikkar seems to be fascinated and held by the pole of Christ of faith without paying sufficient attention to the historical pole of Christian faith. In his legitimate desire and passionate commitment to dialogue among religions, he looks for dehellenization and dehebraization. Though he admits that we cannot throw two thousand years of Hellenistic influence and three thousand years of Hebraic tradition overboard, he feels that the Jewish conception of history has limited the Christian God to being the Lord of History while the ontological notion of Hellenism has reduced God to being the Lord of Being (76). Rather than a total deconstruction that may also lead to a total destruction of Christian faith, we should look closer and clarify the elements and see their constitutive and consequent dimensions.

The Christian experience of God is trinitarian, not monistic or dualistic. God is neither one nor three. If there is one and only one God, the Trinity is either superfluous or no more than a simple modality. If there are three gods, the Trinity is an aberration (64). Father, Son, and Spirit are three persons constituting a unity without confusion and mixing. As St. Augustine remarked, when we begin to count, however, we are into error (*Qui incipit numerare incipit errare*). In Panikkar's cosmotheandric vision of reality, God, the Human, and the World are neither one, nor two, nor three. They are not three things, neither are they one. There is a fundamental relationship, an irreducible connection between these realities. According to Panikkar, "only through the constant negation of duality, by the refusal to close the process, in the conscious renunciation of trying to understand everything, in the *neti neti* of apophatic mysticism, that we can approach the trinitarian mystery" (64). For him, reality is trinitarian, not dualist, neither one nor two: the Source of what is, that which Is, and its very Dynamis; Father, Son, and Spirit; *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ananda*; the Divine, the Human and the Cosmic. Only by denying duality, without reducing everything to unity, are we able consciously to approach it.

Panikkar presents a cosmotheandric and advaitic interpretation of the Christian God through three texts: "It is in him that we have life, and move, and exist" (Acts 17:28), "No one has seen God" (John 1:18), and "So that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). God-Human-World is non-dual; they are distinct but inseparable. One should also understand and make it one's own the experience of Jesus expressed in the following three texts: "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30), "Who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9), and "It is better for you that I go away, because if I do not go away, the Spirit will not come" (John 16:7). Panikkar interprets these texts showing the fundamental relationship between Father, Son, and the Spirit and the uniqueness and universality of the Christian experience of God (76-86). These are meditations, inspired readings and *lectio divino*, rather than biblical exegesis, inspiring and challenging the reader to delve deep into the mystery of Reality.

5. Privileged Places of 'The Experience of God'

The final and fourth chapter speaks of nine "Privileged Places of The Experience of God." God is everywhere, immense, yet does not have parts: God is simple. This means we can meet God completely in any place, whatever form, and we can encounter God anywhere. We have only to seek God and hold ourselves ready for the encounter (89). He gives the example of a fish. The fish has a certain awareness of things but does not perceive that it is surrounded by water. Just so, we do not perceive God if we do not go beyond our purely empirical consciousness. The first generations of Christians criticized "the pagans" because they personified the forces of nature by divinizing them. Recent post-Christian generations reproach Christians for having an anthropological vision of God. God is not reducible either to a 'super-*kosmos*' or to a 'super-*anthropos*'. He is the root of the *cosmotheandric* intuition. We can meet God everywhere but not in just any way. Purity of heart is the condition for the experience of God: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God" (Mt. 5:8).

Among the innumerable places where God is to be found, Panikkar identifies nine: "Love, The Thou, Joy, Suffering, Evil, Pardon, Crucial Moments, Nature and Silence." There seems to be unanimity that the most privileged place for the meeting of humans and God is the experience of love. It is in human love itself that Divinity resides. The experience of God is the experience of thou, which leads us to the impossibility of the experience of I alone, precisely because I am not able to experience myself without being "objectivized" in a thou. Joy, suffering, evil, and pardon also give occasions for the experience of God. Any moment can be a privileged place to encounter God. According to Panikkar, the readiness to be surprised and to wonder is almost a requirement for experiencing God. It is not that the mysterious, the ineffable, the incomprehensible, is in itself identical to the experience of God, but that it is a privileged locus of that experience. It is written that God is a hidden being, whose tabernacle is found in the shadows and whose recreation consists in chatting with people, even about cooking and sex (126). Nature is also a privileged place for the experience of God. The absence of an advaita experience has led Christianity, according to Panikkar, to allow itself to be invaded by a panic fear of a so-called pantheism. To avoid monism, Christians fall into dualism. God and the world are radically separated, which means that the transcendent God becomes progressively more superfluous, relegated to a heaven that is not even the heaven of the astronomers. While nature as the temple of God is a well-known image, it usually is interpreted in a way that keeps divine transcendence intact, at the price of forgetting God's immanence. Nature is not only a privileged but also a natural place for meeting God. Silence, Panikkar concludes, is the medium of God-talk and God-experience. He quotes Angelus Silesius, *The Cherubic Pilgrim*:

> God is so far beyond everything that we can scarcely speak,
> Thus it is also by means of your silence that you adore him.
> Remain silent, beloved, silent...
> If you wish to express the being of eternity,
> You first must abandon all discourse.
> When you remember God, you hear him in yourself.
> You become quiet and if you remain silent and peaceful,
> He will not stop speaking to you.
> No one speaks less than God, without time or place...
> The more that you know God, the more you shall confess
> That you are able to know less of what he is (130).

Knowing how to listen is the gate to God-experience and silence is the medium of God-talk.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the experience of God is understood, by Panikkar, as subjective genitive – God's experience. It is not my experience of God but God's experience in me and through me of which I am conscious. It is a participation of myself in the experience *of* God. It implies my conscious response and my participation in that experience whose ultimate subject is God. I understand my participation in that experience as a communion, a communion between God, who is the subject, and that experience of God that is mine to the degree that I become conscious of it (58). God is not an object of experience. It is the experience of God that occurs within me, in which I participate more or less consciously. Our experience of God is the divine self-consciousness in which we participate as we become, in Christian language, part of the "whole Christ" – the *Christus totus*.

The experience of God is the experience of the religious dimension of reality, transcending reason and passion, which shows its effect fundamentally in the way we live, move, and have our being. It is the life that gives meaning and significance to our God-experience and God-talk. Experience of reality has three constitutive dimensions: World, Human, and God. It is at once the experience of the thing, of ourselves at the interior of the thing, and of God that embraces both. It is the experience of the cosmotheandric icon of reality at the particular place and time, from my personal perspective in the stream of my life. It is rooted in nature, extended to community and oriented to God. The experience of God is, therefore, experience of my profound Self, the paradoxical experience that we are most intimately our own and at the same time superior to ourselves. The necessary condition is to have a pure heart. The experience of God, thus, consists in touching the totality of Being with the totality of my being: to feel in my body, my intellect, and my spirit the whole of reality both within and outside of me. Paradoxically, it is also the experience of contingency: I merely touch the infinite at a point. The experience of God is unique and universal and it is the experience of the Mystery that governs our lives from both within and without. From a Christian point of view, God is with us, not as one more person or object in the world, but as the framework of our gatherings and the bedrock of our streams of life.

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CAN WE SPEAK OF A POSTMODERN CHRISTIANITY?

S. Lourdunathan◆

1. Introduction

Christianity is grounded in absolute truth-claims, whereas Postmodernism[1] upholds a strong sense of relativity of truth. This poses a problem whether we can speak of a postmodern sense of Christianity. The issue is related with more queries such as, while Christian theology harps on monotheism, the belief that there is only one God who as the ground of all existence is rejected by postmodern thinking, be it theological or philosophical or socio-cultural. Hence, does it mean that postmodernism be viewed as the most recent brand of atheism as part of the extension of the modernist secularism and humanism. Since, after the medieval period, there seems to be a philosophical passivity on the part of the Christian theologians/ philosophers, except certain moralist claims, does it mean that Christianity is vulnerable to postmodernism? Broadly speaking, the issue is, Can a Christian be a postmodernist without losing his/her being Christian, and a Postmodernist being in some sense a Christian? How should Christian thinkers respond to postmodernism: as a threat or as a challenge or as new outlook by which the Christian has to re-look at his theological/ philosophical grounds? Of course, this would call for a critical dialogue and a deeper analysis between these two positions, the Christian and the Postmodern.

A critical dialogue between any two positions or persons is possible when both of them agree to meet for purpose of putting forward their set of opinions or claims and may engage to 'see' whether there are any common grounds of agreement between them, to see the points of divergence and respect the points of divergence more than the points of convergence; the method of engaging a critical dialogue, I suggest is possible by adopting

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[1] By 'postmodernism', I refer to the perception of a reality existing independently of thought and language as illusory, that which is normally perceived as real or truth is, in fact, a linguistic construct of the phenomena of subjective experience that is continually adjusted in response to a fluid social consensus.

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the method of 'falsification'[2] than verification; for, verification is only possible to matters of fact rather than to theoretical positions/issues. Moreover, the mode of falsification is less provisional, for instance, it takes only one proposition to falsify the entire scheme or system of thought, yet treat the same for pragmatic purposes. For instance, to say that petrol is the best form of energy is falsifiable by another proposition that atomic energy is the best form of energy, and the proposition that atomic energy is the best form of energy may further be contra-posited by some other form(s) of energy under scientific experimentation. The interesting thing is that, by treating atomic energy as the best form of energy, the proposition that petrol is the best form of energy is falsified but not completely verified to be counterfeited, rendering it completely impractical. Further, for example, it only takes one black rose to falsify the proposition, 'All roses are red'. Falsification, if employed, amounts to certain mutual corrections between positions or propositions and in no way completely throws them outboard. Falsification, as a mode of engaging critical dialogue, guards against any 'excommunication' of each other's positions. This sense of a dialogue to some extent is to risk certain claims in one's position/belief/theory; but it is, at the same time, an invitation to enter freely to exchange of opinions, engage in mutual corrections, and view one's limitations in the belief-system in the light of the other. To a large extent, to engage in a critical dialogue is to set oneself into a rational and ethical demonstration of one's long owned set of ideas, to correct the positions, if found conflicting, and appreciate the other, correct the other's ideas, if needed, and, thus, enrich each other. The aim of a critical dialogue is to enter into ethical relationship by becoming mutually conscious of one's limits and enrichments.

The study attempts to contra-posit both Christianity and Postmodernity so as to see whether there is any space for a reciprocal discussion between them. I hold that the Christians, in general, and 'Christian scholars',[3] in particular, have to learn to unlearn from postmodern sensibilities. In other words, my intention here is to employ a critical dialogue between Christianity and Postmodernity. I assume that there is common political space or ground for both to engage in such a dialogue, and to refrain from viewing mutually as antagonistic positions. The common ground, I believe, is the affirmative dimension of Christianity in the embrace of the discriminated poor, and the postmodern sensibility of the affirmation of 'differences' as against any universality.

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[2] Thomas Khunn speaks of the mode of falsification as against the logical positivist hard verificationism to the question of the progress of science. He claims that science progresses not solely by verifying its statements, rather by treating its claims falsifiable by agreeing to the possible anomalies that need further scrutiny.

2. No Absolute Truth: A Postmodern Call for Solidarity

Postmodernism "affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate... There is no absolute truth: rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate."[4] Such a position of the postmodern seems contradictory to the Christian position that the monotheistic God is the absolute truth, which, in the medieval theological language, is conceived as omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence, the Trinitarian aspects assimilated into the oneness of God and such a God is conceived to be three-in-one-person whose aspects are both transcendental and immanent simultaneously. I do not propose to enter into an analysis of the mutual consistency of such descriptions; rather my point is that the Christian monotheism taken together with all its theological hermeneutics and its Hellenistic Greek groundings remains in disagreement with the postmodern rejection of any absolute truth claim.

A Christian scholar, say X, might argue that the postmodern idea that truth is relativistic, specifically community-constructed and context-conditioned is not in opposition to Christianity as a specific culture which believes in its own specific sense of truth and, in fact, postmodernists do allow the advocacy of the any specific sense of truth given to any historical cultural sense of cultures. Then, the postmodern sense of affirming the particularity of truth-constructions, however, does not mean to defend such a position of X. It does not warrant such escapist argumentation. In fact, the opposite is true with the postmodern claims. It

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[3] The use of the term *Christian scholar/thinker* needs to be clarified. A thinker can be Christian but this does not mean that all Christians are Christian scholars in virtue of being baptized Christian. Just because some one is an ordained/baptized Christian, it should not be assumed that s/he is a Christian scholar. To systematically think about Christianity is different from merely being an ordained/baptized Christian. So also, a Christian thinker to some extent need not overtly affirm that s/he is a Christian. Membership is different from thought-analysis. It is communal to hold that only Christians are Christian scholars.

[4] Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, Grand Rapids: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 8.

does not preach that all truth-claims – be that of Christian, Hindu, or Islam – are true because they are specifically grounded in the differentia of cultural milieu, rather they argue that what is called or conceived to be true is a matter arbitrariness, and constructed and, therefore, truth is no truth but a myth promulgated by cultures.

Postmodernism evidently rejects the existence of any source of truth, morality, and intelligibility distinct from human cultural constructions. Application of this idea amounts to the denial of any God, be that of Christian, Judaic, or Islamic. Postmodernism as a form of extended modernism, known as late-modernism, has its roots in the intellectual tradition of modernism which markedly denies the idea of any supreme Being/God as the source and guidance of the universe. Thus, by extension, Postmodernism professes a complete denial of any absolute truth or Godhead. The denial of any absolute truth by the postmodernists would position them in the line of renaissance thinking as secular and atheistic. The postmodern atheism and the Christian theism are, thus, mutual boundaries to be conscious of/and appreciate each other of their grounds. But this I hold need not be a limitation for engaging a critical dialogue. The Christian theistic proposition stands outside the boundary of falsification, for it is a not proposition to be falsified or even verified, rather its meaning layers/hermeneutics have to be sought within the life-situation of Christian community, by tracing its historical and cultural traces. The theodicy argument whether God exists or not is not, therefore, a matter of argumentation/concern for the postmodernist, since he holds that most of cultural claims are not factual, therefore, beyond verification, and what is claimed to be true is cultural constructions, therefore, relative pertaining to a need for 'inward' analysis within the spectrum of the formation of such belief systems. The relativistic position of Postmodernism opens up the space for the Christian scholar to engage in mutual communication with each other's claims. In a sense, the postmodernist here is not rigid like the positivists; he/she only guards himself or herself against any conceptual subjugations or assimilation by mentally remaining free from any 'conversion' to ontologisms. One can be reminded of the Lyotard's affirmation: "The principles and the contexts have to be chosen by living human beings against their own life-worlds and in the light of their lives with others, by persons able to call, to say, to sing, and using their imaginations, tapping their courage to trans-form."

Richard Rorty, one of the most prominent philosophical defenders of postmodernism, defends the basic postmodernist position. He insists that there is no absolute reality independently existing which can be said of revealing the reality to us apart from our own minds or of other human minds.[5] He holds that each human being interprets reality in accordance with his/her own subjective condition, which, in turn, is influenced by the social and the cultural. Truth, for Rorty, is an intersubjective agreement among the members of a community.[6] That intersubjective agreement permits the members of the community to speak a common language and establish a commonly accepted reality. The end of inquiry, for Rorty, is not the discovery or even the approximation of absolute truth but the formulation of beliefs that further the solidarity of the community, in order "to reduce objectivity to solidarity." He argues that once the notion of objective truth is abandoned, one must choose between a self-defeating relativism and ethnocentrism, neither of which can be justified in a manner that is not circular. He responds that one "should grasp the ethnocentric horn of the dilemma" and "privilege our own group." As far as any new beliefs that we are to consider, they must at least roughly cohere with those already held by the community, or, as Rorty puts it, "We want to be able ... to justify ourselves to our earlier selves. This preference is not built into us by human nature. It is just the way we live now."[7] Rortry speaks of a human community of solidarity based on the liberal principles such as equality and secularity.

The postmodern denial of any absolute truth claim and its rejection of objectivity of modernity are well intended to replace these claims for community solidarity. To say that there is no absolute truth, that truth is not out there, does only mean that our claims are linguistic human constructions or creations and this, therefore, opens up the possibility for interactions in an inter-subjective manner. What can be said of God, from the point of view of postmodern, is that our talk about God (theology) is a matter of language descriptions and as such linguistic descriptions (sentences) need not be objectified to be true. For reasons of clarity let me summarize the argument as follows: The postmodern claim that all human inquiry, thought-frames, systems of beliefs, theoretical positions occurring in language and language-descriptions are only relative for language. They are entirely culturally determined and, therefore, our claims of objectivity have to be suspended, which would open up the space for interaction in view of solidarity.

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[5] Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 13.

[6] Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 21.

[7] Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 29.

3. A Call against Vulnerability of Ideological Imprisonment

The old Aristotelian metaphysics through which Christianity theologized itself, from which its theologians and practitioners (not all) cannot redeem themselves, unfortunately maintains a metaphysical position in the footsteps of Aristotle, that the "starting point of demonstration" of our beliefs or claims "must either be affirmed or denied and that a thing cannot at the same time be and not be"[8] relegates the Christian thinking to be crudely absolutistic and attribute objectivity. The postmodern sensibility against our claims of absolutism and objectivity of truth amounts to correct the Aristotelian Christian thinking in us. To treat our claims beyond the truth of the so-called laws of logic/thought (the law of identity, etc.), does pave the way for a dialogue as against systemic imprisonment within ideological constructs. In other words, the postmodern invitation to do away with the logical rationality is an affirmation of relativity of our truth claims and thereby positions each other in a comfortable place for ethical and social communication.

The scepticism of the postmodern is not a threat but only a challenge and the Christian theism need not be afraid the postmodern atheism but can remind or become conscious of itself to its alleged (wrong) foundations of Aristotelanism/Scholasticism. To treat the Christian theism as a combination of either true or false propositions is different from treating them as matter of cultural constructions.

The postmodern release of the clutches of binaries or categorical oppositions ('to be or not to be' or 'God is or is not' type of discussions) calls for a re-look into our own belief-systems – the cultural/ideological constructions – to unmask their pretensions, to become aware of our cultural-self in and through which we are enchained, and unchain the process of self-consciousness. The absolutistic attitude of the Christian and its alleged all-knowing catechetical attitude for some time need to be bracketed as to pave way for a mutual presence. The space for irrationality by the postmodern is a reminder for the Christian's rigidity of its coherency logic to claims of absolutism. In this sense, the postmodern is not a disguised enemy of the Christian but a prophetic voice against the clutches of the binaries/structural logistics/ideological imprisonments of the very same Christianity in which one is a partaker.

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[8] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III.2.996b.28-30.

Let me illustrate what is meant by the postmodern sense of being *beyond-binary*. The idea that X is holy is intrinsically linked with the idea that Y is unholy. Both X and Y is positioned in a binary relation, a mode of categorical opposition. The Aristotelian logic of non-contradiction is the mode in which X and Y are construed in the very same system. To consider X to be holy, the construct requires Y, yet another construction to be relegated in the subjugated realm of unholiness. The Christian idea of holiness is linked with the very same 'Christian' idea of construing unholiness and, by extension and application, the human beings in the Christian community may be positioned in the value hierarchy of holiness to unholiness, from God to Devil, from highness to lowness, from the 'called-few' to uncalled many. To say that God loves us simultaneously is to affirm that the devil hates us, and those who are construed in the political space of holiness automatically presupposes to love the humankind and, in the order of hierarchy, the lower ones are construed oppositional. To render authority/power to holiness would, then, automatically mean the reduction or erosion of power or authority of those who are downgraded in the order of hierarchical holiness. So, the question of emancipation primarily begins in the very same constructs in which we are bound. Foundationally, the ethos of emancipation is not 'out there' for the salvation of 'others'; the very same system with its conceptual/logical constructs and the ontological foundations need to be released. It is not that X is to redeem Y alone, but the point is, both X and Y are to be set beyond the construed binaries of thought and culture. Both sinfulness and holiness are, thus, two sides the very same coin and the coin is marketed culturally.

The postmodern sensibility of engaging a mode of *beyond-boundary*, thus, exposes the linguistic and cultural constructions within the system. The rigidity of the system needs to be exposed in order that a vacuum is created; a sense of void is ushered in to perceive life afresh: relativism of the postmodern aims at a fresh outlook than its destruction. In a sense, it destroys the old ways of thinking to pave way for freshness of thinking beyond any absolute claim. The strict borders are, thus, eroded, the question of identity (as in the language of Aristotle) is looked afresh, in a mode of relativism, where there is the merging of the boundaries, a profound space for interaction. Thus, it is a call against our own vulnerability to the ideological constructs.

4. Deconstruction: A Mode to Expel the Authoritarian Centre

The postmodernists carry out deconstruction as a mediation to unravel the authoritarian centre of the structure or linguistic and cultural totality. Derrida suggests the way of deconstructing the text in question. As we explore the reciprocal possibility between Postmodernism and Christianity, we need to be reminded of Derrida's caution in employing deconstruction of the given-text or structure. He says: "I was quite explicit about the fact that nothing of what I have said had a destructive meaning. Deconstruction has nothing to do with destruction. [I]t is simply a question of … being alert to the implications, to the historical sedimentation in the language we use and that is not destruction."[9] Derrida was against any totality and he favoured, "the death of the centre" by a mode of deconstruction. Derrida, in this writings, especially in Grammatology, analyses western philosophy as a totality, a metaphysics of presence, supported by a series of founding concepts or centres, that each one hoped to rule or dominate other systems of thought, by remaining unsullied it promoted practices of domination. He says:

> Successively, and in regulated fashion, the centre receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics like the history of the West is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix … is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this word. It could be that all the names, related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated an invariable presence – *eitdos*, *arche*, *telos*, *energia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man and so forth.[10]

Deconstruction, for Derrida, begins by identifying the centre of a system, or the privileged term in a violent conceptual hierarchy and represents an intervention to make that system or hierarchy tremble. The postmodernists' sensibility to resist any totality or monopolization points out similar directions by a mode of deconstruction to restore the differences and particularities as they are in their inter-connectedness and in ruptures, which are robbed or straightened within the imprisonment of the absolute truth claims.

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[9] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Maryland: John Hopkins University Publications, 1997, 271.

[10] Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, trans. Giacomo Donis, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001, 40.

In the interface between postmodernism and Christianity, the Christian thought, as promulgated by the medieval thinking, is translated, as a social structure – the Church, which needs to be brought in face the task of deconstruction. The purpose, of course, is not destruction but identifying the privileged centre(s) and its conceptual and cultural hierarchy in favour of rebuilding an authentic sense of Christian community. The question, therefore, revolves around the exposure of the determination of Being, the *eidos*, the *arche* of the Church hierarchy with its alleged value-ascriptions to restore non-centeredness, namely, the community of the Christian in the spirit of the gospel. Within the Gospel, there is no reference to any authoritarian centre, for the gospels narrate the ethos and ethic of restoration of the discriminated and disadvantaged people. So long as there is a cultural investment of power and authority identified at different individualized power centres, the church will remain a cultural text of the matrix of power relations with all its metaphors of love, but deep down chained to the philosophical traditions of the West, webbing grand narratives such as Salvation, Kingdom, universal brotherhood, etc., sustained by a process of self-legitimation.

5. Incredulity towards Grand Narratives

Jean-François Lyotard, a foremost postmodernist, who first distinguished between the modern and the postmodern, claims that the term "modern to designate any science that legitimates itself (self-legitimation) with reference to a meta-discourse ... making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working Subject, or the creation of wealth."[11] The terms meta-discourse, grand narrative, and self-legitimation need certain clarification. A meta-discourse or a grand narrative is the overarching theoretical construct, explanatory of the social or cultural structure or text by which human lives are interpreted in a specific manner, in the light of the grand narrations provided within the system. Moreover, a grand narrative is one that self-legitimizes itself, devoid of any readiness to falsification or any testability or scrutiny. For Lyotard, "this is not to suggest that there are no longer any credible narratives at all. By meta-narratives or grand narratives, I mean precisely narrations with a legitimating function."[12]

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[11] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: University Press, 1989, xxiv.

Rejecting the defining narrative structures of modernity, Lyotard announces the *post*-modern age "as incredulity towards meta-narratives."[13] The purpose of waging a war against any meta-discourse is to pave way for the voice of those narrations, silenced by the totality or truth claims of the meta-narrative. It is an attempt to refine ourselves to the subjectivized conditions (enslaved) within the totalized construct. "Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy.[14] The issue, then, is to identify those grand narratives or meta-discourses within Christianity that have been promulgated to devoice the voices of the differences of cultural texts.

Directionally, I might suggest that the pronounced spiritualism of the Church and amazing material wealth of the Church themselves are such totalities which might veil the church from listening to voice of the differences actively, responsibly, and politically in differentia of the cultural contexts of the Christian people across the globe. For example, the narrative that as Christians we are people of God, though sounds great, has perpetuated disability to take responsibility of the problem of casteism within the Christian communities of India. In other words, the type of meta-discourses available in the official church benumbs the Christian church to act locally and politically and often the church personnel, I mean those who are invested with power by ecclesiastical rationality, tend to take security in the moralistic meta-narratives. For instance, the meta-pronouncement of the Church that God loves the humankind in a specific sense denounces or discriminates the church from loving the disadvantaged in a discriminate manner. The universal love veils the love in particular with specific risible ways. Insofar as such meta-narratives remain not intervened, questioned, or interpreted in the light of the specificities of differentia of cultures, the church in India will remain a minority less political of its capacity and vulnerable to political majoritarianism. The truth of all meta-narratives cautions the postmodernists as exaggerated error. In short, I appeal that the Indian

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[12] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, 19.

[13] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiv.

[14] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, xxv.

Church has to break itself from its own self imposed or self-legitimated clutches and iron cages of hierarchical bureaucratic western rationality. This can be done only by developing sensitivity to the voice of the voiceless, i.e., those who denied representations within the structural hierarchy of the church itself.

6. Meaningfulness in Pluralistic Relativism and Relationality

The writings of Ferdinand de Saussure, whose writings ignited the post-structuralists and postmodernists, and Derrida's writings provide certain insights into the question of meaningfulness that the Christian church might embark upon for interventions. For Saussure, the question of meaningfulness is a matter of arbitrariness, whereas for the Christian church the question of meaningfulness is a matter of theological centrality. For Saussure, both 'arbitrariness and relationality in the network of linguistic structure, as against any objective or central text, is a matter of meaningfulness. He writes: "In a language, there are only differences, without fixed terms."[15] Jacques Derrida indicates such intrinsic nature of difference with his own concept of *difference*, indicating not only differentiation, but also the deferment of the moment of closure, that is, definition and, hence, the perpetual play of difference. "*Différance* is the nonfull, nonsimple, structured and differentiating origin of differences." The writings of Derrida expose the view that postmodernists do, in fact, reject any absolute truth claims, that of both subjectivity and objectivity. Emphasis of differentia, for Derrida implies a serious sense of the differentia of the Subject Self in the plurality of differentia of cultures. Difference, for Derrida, "is at the origin of all ethics as of all would-be centres. It is the spatialization and temporalisation which precede all centres, all concepts and all reality, making these things possible," both by difference and deference.[16]

Would the Christian, then, revisit its philosophical constructions of what makes meaningfulness? Would the church be ready to allow itself to be challenged by the postmodern considerations of the question of meaningfulness? Can the Christian Church be ready to respond to the strong sense of non-centeredness, a rejection of any centred author as the meaning-giver? Derrida holds that the perceiving or meaning-giving essential self (the Perceiver or the Supreme Perceiver, 'The Gaze' of Foucault) is also not devoid of deconstruction-for-difference. The Subject itself is called into question here. For Derrida, the difference is not only of the people or objectivity, but also of the Self (For the Christian theological linguistic description about God, Church, lay-people, etc.) that differentiates. Will the Christian scholars treat postmodernist cautions as a risk or a challenge? The implication of the statements of Derrida, such as the "Subject, too, cannot be assumed to be a unitary whole without difference, but rather, must in turn, itself be deconstructed"[17] or "The deconstruction of objectivity runs parallel to the deconstruction of subjectivity"[18] must be carefully studies. As objective truth is a narrative, so also the subjectivity that assumes the authorship of objectivity is also a social construction, a myth to be dispensed with. The spirit of the western Christian as the provider of meaning for the rest of the world has to be suspended if only the postmodernist sensitivity on the question of meaningfulness is rendered explicit to the conceptual centralities of Christianity. Would the Christian allow himself to the postmodern critique of the notion of 'centred-Self' shared by a web of power-relational selves epitomized in universalism and grand generalizations? This, in fact, is an area of tough dialogue from both ends of Postmodernism and Christianity.

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[15] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, London: Fontana/Collins, 1981, 120.

[16] Jon Simons, ed., *Contemporary Critical Theorists: From Lacan to Said*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, 88.

7. Conclusion

Hostility of the postmodernists against absolutism and centrality of the Self, their deconstruction of hierarchical power relations, etc., have positive ethical content. Most of these insights are simultaneously tied with their heightened sensitivity towards differentia, of the people, namely, the subjected and the subjugated people. This is the rich area of mutual interface between the spirit of the Gospels texts (devoid of the Roman theological texts) and postmodernism. Their resistance to forms of totalitarianism or territorial geo-politics of the powerful nations and voices against different forms of dominations would invite the Christian church to revisit itself, its ideological, and structural patterns of power relations. At the same time, it is a call to join hands with the postmodern cravings towards the restoration of those lives of the people who are systematically denied of their live-forms.

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[17] Jacques Derrida, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1991, 64-65.

[18] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 16.

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DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES OF GENDERED FAMILY IN THE *MANUSMRTI*

Maya S.◆

1. Introduction

Religious texts and literature have always been playing significant role in the social formations worldwide. *Manusmrti* is known as such a text in India that has influenced the organization of social institutions. An analysis of this ancient text would prove the fact that the structure of household and family is conceptualized in it through the descriptions and prescriptions of duties of men and women. The *garhasthyasrama* and the *dharma* concepts in the text, not only target the life of Hindu people but it is written with an intention to assist the good life of all human beings. Although such a claim could be accepted, on the basis of the values around the concept *dharma*, it could be supplemented by doing an analysis based on gender and by interpreting the discursive structures of the institution of family that is generated by the modern discourse around the text.

The linguistic invasion into the minds of people by the scriptures belonging to a religion could be beneficially analyzed by a journey through the verses of *Manusmrti.* Although there are various attitudes towards the relevance of *Manusmrti* today, the discussion about the relevance itself could be raised as showing the relevance of the text and its content. The texts which are known as religious texts have influenced the minds of people and have affected their conceptualizations all over the world. Various scholars opine that the *Manusmrti* had cast its spell over centuries not only in India but abroad as well.[1] With the ideas of social structuring, especially in installing the institution of civilized family, the text would seem to have a significant role. There have been extremist views about the significance of the text, while some people hold that it has to be accepted as a whole with due respect and reverence without raising

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[1] D. N. Shanbhag, "Keynote Address" in *Manusmrti and Woman*, ed. K. B. Archak, Sambodhana Series 10, gen. ed. D. N. Shanbhag, Dharward: Karnataka University, 1998, ii.

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any dissent. But, for some antagonists, if there is any text to be burnt it is *Manusmrti*! Both the views were followed by the people in different regions that later on became India. The features of the so-called Hindu society in India such as, *Varnasramadharma*,[2] the belief in the monarchy of a King (*Manusmrti*, IX.301), etc., were all remaining unquestioned for long. It was only recently, after the introduction of the idea of the democratic governance that the adversaries became strong and the concepts got critics. The translations of the Sanskrit text of *Manusmrti* into English (which was earlier available only to upper caste men who learned Sanskrit) by the orientalists, made it more accessible to the people in India to take it as a handbook for structuring the social life. In 1927, *Manusmrti* was thrown into flames in Maharashtra, on the west coast of India by a group led by B. R. Ambedkar, who were fuming against the caste hierarchy decreed by such a text.[3] Ambedkar regarded *Manusmrti* as the greatest affront against humanity, equality, and justice.[4] Thus, it could be maintained that *Manusmrti* has ever been the mouthpiece of Indian culture and *Manu* seems to a votary to the cultural and social organization even in the twentieth century. This process was successfully carried out by destroying the democratic and humanistic features of Indian society.

S. Radhakrishnan maintains that a high position had been given to *Manusmrti* among the *Smrtis*. According to him, Manu is the founder of the social and moral order, who first settled *Dharma* and he is the progenitor of the humankind.[5] These points could be taken as the historical assessment to believe the prevailing outlook, as the rigid form of culture and civilization reflected in the work. Then, it could be argued that such reflections have formulated the metaphysical conceptions during ages which controlled the everyday lives of people, though not in a direct way. Yet, Radhakrishnan adds that we have to accept Manu as an exclusive advocate of the established order whose system provides no scope for progress. For, Manu has put forward four ways of right sources of human action: *Veda*, *Smrti*, *Achara*, and the conscience (*Manusmrti*, II.12). We are allowed to do whatever agreeable to our conscience ('*atmanah priyam*') and convincing to our reason ('*manah putam samacharet*') (*Manusmrti*, VI.46). The disappointing dot, however, is that there is another verse ordering that the teachings of *Smrti* should not be put into the test of logic; for virtue has emanated from this text (*Manusmrti*, II.10).[6]

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[2] *Varnasramadharma* is a job-based division of the society into four groups. The four *varnas* are *Bhahmins* who are priests, *Kshatriyas* who were warriors, *Vaisyas* who were traders, and *Sudras* who did the jobs like cleaning and washing. The four *Ashramas* or stages of the life are *Artha*, *Dharma*, *Kama*, and *Moksha*.

[3] Shanbhag, "Keynote Address," i.

[4] Shamshul Islam, *Untouchables in Manu's India*, New Delhi: Book for Change, 2004, 7.

[5] S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1923, 515.

2. *Garhasthya* and *Dharma* in *Manusmrti*

Nevertheless the text seems to be more about *Dharma*, *Karma*, and *Moksha*, as the attainment of spiritual goals. It is evident that it gives primacy to family life from one perspective. All the chapters could be observed as revolving around the concept of family life while talking about the other ways of life as well. Even the sixth chapter, which elaborates on the life of recluse and ascetics striving for salvation, starts with an impression that *vanaprastha and sannyasa* are some stages that are spawn from *garhasthya*. Thus, the chapter draws our attention to the fact that the householder is the most important and basic stage of *asramas* as the other stages is either merging into it or breeding out of it. With this argument, *brahmacharya* could be seen as a preparative stage for entering into *garhasthya*. There are interpretations which hold that the householder phase is central, as in the other phases people are fostered by the householders' generous almsgiving. This shows that the householder is responsible for paying for the other *asrama* people and, thus, it can be claimed that other *asramas* are generated and maintained because of *garhasthya*.[7] Romila Thaper has mentioned that the gift-giving served to reinforce social status and reciprocity between dominant groups in the *varna* system and the redistribution of wealth was done through such gift-giving.[8] She draws empirical evidences from north Indian regions for the rituals of *Grhya-Sutras* and the domestic rituals being enjoined upon every *grhapati* as they were counted among the occasions in expending wealth. The gift forms were *danam* and *dakshina* and social obligations were also the sources of economic distribution.

The fifth chapter of *Manusmrti* proposes the duties of women, which tie them inside the household and conceives their identity as something simply inside the family. The femininity of a woman is imagined in the degree of her ability to do the household work and to obey the men in the family. The verses in the chapter confirm the clear attitude of the text to control the identity of woman. The fourth chapter tries to reinforce the family structure by elaborating the disposition and demeanour that a householder should keep, for the purpose of leading an elegant family life. At one level this depicts the idea that only the man would have to develop the character, since woman is supposed only to obey the man. The third chapter also concentrates on the family formation, as it explains the marriage customs which are male-centric in conceptualizing the marriage to do with the man as the doer. The man is subject who would do the activity by making use of the object woman. The objectification is obvious in the verses which even suggest the women of grey hair, over-bodied, and diseased are not eligible to take in marriage. The eight forms of marriage are again man-centred as all of them explain how a man can take a woman in marriage. Taking a woman in marriage is to lead a successful life of the householder, fulfilling the *purusharthas* of *kama* and *artha*; so is the idea underlying the marriage and family of *Manusmrti*.

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[6] R. N. Sharma, ed., *Manusmrti*, Delhi: Chaukamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1998.

[7] N. Gopinathan Nair, *Manusmrti*, Kottayam: DC Books, 1983, 62.

[8] Romila Thaper, *From Lineage to State*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1984, 63, 64, 65.

The second chapter which speaks about the source and applications of *dharma* leads to the *brahmachari* life stage and the mannerisms of *brahmachari* towards women including *gurupatni*. The verses maintain the idea of great respect that is to be shown toward mothers, sister-in-laws, and sisters. Surprisingly enough, for a gender analysis, they discriminate against women stating that serving husband itself is the same as the Veda-learning for a woman. This is strategically following an attempt to control women just to fit into the family structure. The mythical male-chauvinistic stories in the first chapter deal with the creation of beings claiming that man and woman were formed from the splitting of the body of *Brahma* who was believed to be the God of creation. The God himself is a man and was made up of the ovum put into the water by a male *bhagavan*. According to such metaphysics and myth of creation, woman becomes a secondary being in every sense.

The seventh and eighth chapters describe about the rulers and their duties, including their duty to marry properly. Along with the responsibilities toward the people the king has the duty to lead an apt family life looking after the wife and children. In this section, the text has carefully depicted the objectification of woman saying that he should marry a beautiful and good-tempered woman from the same class and kinsfolk. There are verses suggesting his obligation towards the daughter as to give her duly married off on appropriate time. Some verses dealing with women by including them in the group of wealth, horse, chariot, etc. that are captured by a king in the war, show the objectification of female beings. The women of the defeated party were considered to be the properties that could be detained as part of winning the war.

The ninth chapter of *Manusmrti* forms the basic arguments against its gender coldness. This section is totally devoted to explain the duties of husband and wife that formulate the very anti-female family concepts. The verses are thoroughly appropriating women's identity and sexuality engaging their lives simply inside the family. The tenth chapter, which deals with promiscuous mingling, also targets at the marriage and family matters in a way. The people born out of the four *varnas* are accepted but it is notable that the relationships of upper *varna* men and lower *varna* women are only mentioned as a possibility. The relation between the hierarchy in terms of caste and gender is patent in such concepts. Also the verses express the male-centeredness by talking only about sons born out of such inter-*varna* conjugality.

The eleventh chapter that verbalizes sins and expiations portray the possibility of violations of family laws in terms of women's chastity. Although this part doesn't pay much attention to criminalize women some verses express the anxiety of spoiling conjugal system by the transgression. For example, the student (*brahmachari*) is to lie in a burning iron bed or hug a burning iron woman-statue, if he happens to share bed with the teacher's wife. The final chapter of *Manusmrti* is also concerned about the high position of morality while talking about *dharma*, *karma*, and spiritual goals. It stipulates *dharma* as ordered by the *parishad*, formed by *vadikabrahmana* who are morally fit. *Grihastasrama brahmana* also is included in the group of ten *brahmana* that makes a *niyamaparishad*. The law-makers' forum that the text itself has conceived may seem to be moralistic. There are many allusions in the text that illustrate the moralistic male-centred household construction as a main plan held by *Manusmrti*. By going through all the chapters of the text, one perceives the deliberate attempt that the text has made in the conceptualization of household, family life, femininity, and masculinity through religious and cultural schemes. This may be more evident in the interpretations of the duties of man and woman in the *Manusmrti*.

3. Conceptualizing Woman through Her Duties

The verses from 146 to 166 in the fifth chapter of *Manusmrti* put forward the duties of women of all the four social orders. The usage '*uktho vah sarvavarnanam streenam dharmonnibodhath*' makes it clear that the rules on women and their duty described in the text are for all the women from all the four *varnas* or social orders. Though the usage of the word *dharma* comes in the verse to denote the duty of a woman, in fact, it doesn't refer to the same kind of *dharma* in the *purushartha* list meant for male human beings. "*Balaya va yuvathya va vrudhaya vapi yoshitha // Na swathanthryena karthavyam kimchitkaryam gruheshvapi*" (V.147). That means, a girl or a maid or an old woman, must not do anything independently (i.e., on her own will) even in the house. It looks outrageous that the list of the duties of women starts by such a statement. This verse evidently shows that the house is the one and only one possible space for the woman and she shouldn't do anything on her own even in that place. This type of ludicrous laws are prescribed; following this verse would doubtlessly lead any researcher into the conclusion that the text has treated women in a very low manner compared to the treatment offered to men. Women have stages of life as daughter, wife, and mother that cannot be compared to any four *Asramas* of men. "*Balaye pithurvase thishttethpanigrahasya youvane // Puthranam bharthari prethe na bhajetstree swathanthratham*" (V. 148). That is, she is supposed to remain under the control of her father in childhood, under the control of husband in her youth, and under the control of her son after the demise of her husband in old age (V.148). That means, the women should not assume independence under any circumstances whatsoever.

The following verse restricts women even from wishing separation from her father, husband, or sons. A woman living separate from these relatives would be condemnable in both families, i.e., the father's and the husband's families (V.149). This indirectly clarifies that the woman has no house of her own and she only has either her father's or her husband's house. This could be seen as a crucial phenomenon in the ever strong dominant patriarchal family system followed in India. Though "the theory of patriarchal family"[9] was questioned by his followers, Henry Sumner Maine has mentioned about the patriarchal family system in India as notable and he brought under consideration the rich data of Indian customary law that is patently connected with British imperial enterprise.[10]

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[9] Patricia Uberoi, ed., "Introduction," *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, 8.

Manusmrti holds that by being skilful in her household duties, a woman remain with a happy and cheerful frame of mind, keeping the furniture neat and tidy and avoiding extravagance: "*Sada praharshtaya bhavyam gruhakaryeshu dakshaya // Susamskruthopaskaraya vyaye chamukthahasthaya*" (V.150). This is, again, a testimony to the fact that the patriarchal family system continues to shamelessly prove its sovereignty over women. The verse shows that the duty of a woman is mainly to be at home taking care of the household materials. One cannot run off the criticism towards the duty assigned to a woman to be happy and cheerful all the time. It is an injustice that denies the existence of a mind for a female human being that may feel and think in different ways according to the surroundings and experiences.

Another duty of a woman is to serve her husband to whom she has been given in marriage by her father or brother with father's consent. She is not supposed to transgress against him even after his demise (V.151). Total control over the sexuality of woman is enrooted in such verses. It is asserted and explained in another verse which tells us that after the demise of her husband (i.e., her lord), she is expected to control her passion by living on auspicious flowers, bulbs, and fruits, never ever to dream of taking the name of another man (V.157).

The woman is supposed to be a chaste wife, who would always serve her husband, even if he is found devoid of learning, character, and conjugal fidelity (V.154). This is the only way to get glorified in heaven for her as she has no other religious rites to do (V.155-156), while for the man it is not his wife, children, or parents, but his virtue alone glorifies him after death (IV.239). At the same time, a virtuous wife is one who attains the region of her husband, by serving him in life and death. This exemplifies one of the very anti-woman elements the text propagates as if she is just a part of the man, having no 'self' of her own. The verse, "*Mruthe bharthari sadhvi stree brahmacharye vyavsthita // Svargam gachathyaputrapi yatha the brahmacharinah*" (V.160), reveals the 'self'-lessness of women in a strong manner saying that a *sadhvi* (virtuous wife), by taking the life of asceticism after the demise of her husband would go to heaven like a *Brahmacharin*. Interestingly, this declaration means that the woman has no possible way of her own to get heaven; moreover, the value of her asceticism could only be understood in terms of that of a male *brahmacharin.* The woman is never described as an ascetic without a marriage or after the married life, according to the text. The spirituality is, thus, seen as 'gents-only' realm and the women can only be "like a *brahmacharin*," but never could she be a *brahmacharini*.

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[10] Uberoi, ed., "Introduction," 10.

In the case of marriage, a virtuous woman is advised nowhere to take a second husband in any *Sastra* (V.162) even for the purpose of begetting progeny (V.161). A woman is condemned in the society if she marries a better husband discarding the inferior one (V.163). Denouncing a woman if she happens to divorce and remarry is still a social phenomenon prevalent in the modern India. For acts such as infidelity, according to the ancient belief yielded by *Manusmrti*, the woman would be reborn as a she-jackal afflicted with many foul diseases like leprosy, etc. (V.164). This is the extreme way of regulating the sexuality of women, by frightening them repeatedly about the seriousness of sin and punishments. This implies the strong wish to maintain the family structure, keeping the woman permanently inside it. The strategy is very clear in the following verses. The good woman is always suggested to be controlled in her speech, body, and mind (V.165). "*Anen narivruthena manovagdehasamyatha // Ihagrayam keerthimapnothi pathilokam paratra cha*" (V.166). Repeating this in two consecutive verses, the virtue of a dutiful woman is emphasized to be controlled in her speech, body and mind (*manovagdehasamyathe*). Thus, *Manusmrti* proposes that in the case of a woman (wife) to be faithfully doing the duties of matrimony, to acquire glory in this life, and to attain the region of the husband after death should be the only one ambition in her life. Thus, *Manusmrti*, the respected textbook of social order in India, imprisons the woman with the tie of husband and family. No one can deny the fact that the text *Manusmrti*, in fact, has caused some wretched conceptualizations to restrict the woman in the architectural space of the household. According to the text, the house is the only world for the woman and her self-realization is contained in the completion of duties towards the family members. The psychodynamics of social organization could be observed as evolving from these scriptural injunctions in the Indian context. The psychological constellations in individuals are formed by the legal monogamy, the organization of family, and the in-group formation that have been culturally of patriarchal in pattern. This could have turned a foundational reason for the internalization of identities as a wife and as a husband by the textual enterprise of *Manusmrti* as well.

4. Householder and His Dharma

In the process of family construction through the role formation as householder and wife, *Manusmrti* has been endorsing the same laws in favour of men and against women. It has propounded many codes that hamper women's lives but, at the same time, one can see that the text has put forward many rules for men as well. They are compiled as the duties of a householder, but indirectly they conceptualize the masculinity and identity of a man and apparently regulating the man's movements and liberties in life. The fourth chapter elaborates on the duties of a man, as that of the householder in his second quarter of life and the rules and restrictions for him to lead a virtuous life. Connived by the rules, the householder in *Manusmrti* might be regulated, though in a different manner a woman might have been. Although the laws are mainly for the life of a twice-born man, the way in which he is supposed to do things as per the text would show the command of the literature over the everyday life of the people who read them. As part of the well-known process of Sanskritisation in modern India,[11] the text could be proved to affect all the other caste people. Maybe some of the rules that prevent a householder from going away for long journey crossing a river, accepting gifts and food from others, etc., are particularly meant for *Brahmin* men.

The rules such as the householder should leave his bed in *Brahma muhurta* (forty-eight minutes before the sunrise, IV.92), defecate far away from the fire, bath in his own tank, offer fire five times a day, etc., illustrate how the day is ordered by the language of text (see the chapter four). But the laws on the virtues of a householder may be found important for all men as their observance makes him great in the death-after world but not his property or family relations (IV.239). The auspicious conduct of the man is strictly stipulated by the text. He is supposed to be self-controlled, properly behaved, and pure in body and spirit (IV.145). A man's purity and modesty are also proclaimed in the text even though we can find more options for a man to keep his liberty over sexuality and individual life. One verse says (IV.134): The worst thing which would shorten the life of a man in this world is the act of (clandestinely) visiting another's wife: "*Na heedyasamanayushyam loke kinchan vidhyathe // Yadhyaṣam purushasyeha paradaropasevanam*" (IV.134). The translation made by Sharma (1998) uses the word 'clandestinely' within brackets. It may leave questions about what if the act is done not secretly. It is a problem if the open relation with another's wife is acceptable or not. According to Buhler's (1886) translation, in this world there is nothing as detrimental to long life as criminal conversation with another man's wife. It is only taken as 'criminal conversation' by Buhler, what is said to as 'the secret act of visiting' in the other translation raising the doubt if the actual author meant a sexual act or just a conversation. The usage *paradaropasevanam* (*para daram* = other's wife) really makes it unclear that the *upa sevanam* (activity near by) extended to what limit. These types of use of language in the translations necessarily leaves confusion about what the actual or first writer (although the confusion may arise if the first writer is the actual writer, etc., as well) meant by saying something in a written form of language. This entailed in the textual reading all over and it is predominant about some verses in the *Manusmrti* as well. It is more visible according to a gender-biased reading that such loopholes by the usage of the language are more clubbed with the verses which restrict men.

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[11] Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, 515-518 and 477. Also see details about Sanskritisation in, M. N. Srinivas, *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritisation and Other Essays*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

In the case of the duty to keep the auspicious conduct, the householder is reminded by the text not to quarrel with priests, *Rittvigs* (i.e., celebrants of sacrifice on his behalf), preceptors, mental uncles, guests, dependents, servants, infants, old men, sick folks, physicians, cognates, marriage relations, and relations (IV.179), nor with his parents, sisters, daughters-in-law, sons' wives, brothers, and slaves (IV.180). By avoiding such quarrels, a householder may be exonerated of all sins and by conquering them a householder can conquer all the worlds (IV.181). It is also said as the duty of the householder is to consider his wife and children as part and parcel of his own self (IV.184).

But these declarations on the duties of men would find the ultimatum when we go through the language in which it is presented in different verses in different chapters of the text. For example, in the ninth chapter, "the protection of wives" is said to be the highest duty of men of all four social orders (IX.6).[12] The following verses[13] elaborate how the protection is to be carried out. Any reader could easily see the fact that the mental and physical 'control' is the meaning of 'protection' prescribed by the text. This is a good example for the games played in the text using the language, which could be manipulating the minds of people in the process of conceptualization. At the same time, the type of a play allows the freedom to take either the positive or the negative connotations. Anyhow, the language use in the verses of text, with and without all the limitations of translation, mostly appears to be gender numb. This would be clearer by an examination of the duties assigned to woman and man, as householder and wife. This attempt may demonstrate the degree of discrimination in the justice made by the text towards both the genders and may reveal the linguistic invasion of the scriptures into the social formations.

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[12] The translation of *Manusmrti* is from Sharma, ed., *Manusmrti*, 392.

5. Duties of Husband and Wife

The ninth chapter of *Manusmrti* starts with the description of the duties of husband and wife leading a virtuous life (IX.1). Duties assigned to the husband and wife are applicable to the man and woman when they are together or separated as well. The codes on the obligations and rights of husband and wife are sophisticated through the verses from one to hundred in this chapter. According to Kulluka, the violations of the duties of married life dealt within this chapter, though do not fall within the purview of the ordinary legal duties of an individual, are punishable by law as crimes and the King's court has jurisdiction to take cognizance of cases in which the rights or obligations, thus, to be legally established or enforced.[14] Though the duties prescribed as such are not in the present legal system in India, many of the concepts are underlying in the laws existing in the country. Moreover, the social codes which are believed to be followed, as unwritten laws for an acceptable mode of social life, could be traced out clearly in the *Smrti* statements. Especially the norms of being a husband and a good wife as well as good woman in general are obviously uttered in the text, which don't seem to be altered much during any development period in the region.

"*Aswathanthrah streyah karyah purushaihi svairdivanisam // Vishayeshu cha sajjanthyah samsthapya athmano vase*" (IX.2) prescribes

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[13] See especially the ninth chapter, eleventh verse, which says that the woman should be employed day and night at home looking after the household materials, taking care of the cleanliness of the persons at home, etc.

[14] Sharma, ed., *Manusmrti*, 391.

that men should never give any license to their wives in day and night. By keeping them engaged in commendable pursuits, it is the duty of the husband to maintain them under their own control. Kulluka has explained what would be the pursuits in which women must be engaged. The text says just "*vishayeshu cha sajjanthyah*." Kulluka, however, explains it by "*Anishiddheshvapi ruparasadi vishayeshu*." That is, the pursuit should not be in condemnable objects of sight, hearing, etc.[15] In another verse, it is made clearer: "*Arthastha sangrahe chainam vyaye chaiva niyojayet // Sauche dharmannapaktyam cha panigrahasya vekshane*" (IX.11). That is, the wives should be employed in storing and spending money, looking after the expenses of the household, in maintaining the cleanliness of their persons and of the house, and in looking after the beddings, wearing apparels, and household furniture. This is seen as the duty of the husband but the verses themselves make it clear that it is not possible to control women by force and so these should be the way to organize them. It is deplorable to note that this is the hidden motive behind the well-known verse, "*Pita rakshati kaumare bhartha rakshati youvane // Rakshanti sthavire putra na stree swathanthyamarhati*," meaning, "The father protects her in infancy, the husband in youth, and sons in old age; a woman does not deserve independence" (IX.3). This idea is repeatedly asserted in different chapters, as another form of the verse could be seen in the fifth chapter (V.148). It reflects as if the idea is propagated out of respect towards women. By stating that it is condemnable, for the father if he does not marry her daughter off at the proper age, for the husband if he visits his wife during her menstrual period and for the son if he does not protect his mother after the demise of her husband, the text attempts to depict that women are duly considered and there is no other issue if this idea is followed very well. The people who try to read the verses in a positive way do not see the fact that the concepts evolved and enforced by such practices would neglect the identity and liberty of women as individuals. The symbols and idols of 'woman' simply as daughter, wife, and mother are desperately evident in the hundreds of other verses, which would never give any duck to read the verse as favourable to women.

The following verse even conceptualizes a woman as the "brooch of dignity" (IX.5) of the two families (her father's and husband's). Because of the very reason, it is the rule that women should be protected from the slightest corrupting influence such as evil company, etc. This would necessarily draw the question why only women are to be protected and why men get the position and duty to protect them. The text leaves no sign that the men are also human beings who may hold insecurity feelings and may have fear and fickleness, which are feminine according to the text (IX.15). Noteworthy is the fact that the text openly declares that this kind of control (in the name of protection) of women is the highest duty of male members of all the four social orders. "*Imam hi sarvavarnanam pasyantho dharmamuthamam // Yatante rakshintu bharyam bhartharo durbala api*" (IX.6). This also asserts that even a weak, diseased or physically deformed husband should endeavour to protect his wife. By protecting the wife, a husband (man) protects the purity of his progeny and his family as well as his character, self, and virtue (IX.7). Nevertheless, the text sees the possibility that women could protect themselves that is the best way of protection; maybe, as the experiences of many go, the imprisonment in the house under the guard of close relatives might not work as a sufficient protection (IX.12).

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[15] Sharma, ed., *Manusmrti*, 391.

Outlandish is the way of presentation of duties of men and women, as it expounds points, making repetitions and contradictions; moreover, confusions abound all the way. Men are asked to protect women in the above explained way along with the comment that it would be the best way if women protect themselves. Then, the verses in the text proceed to assert again that men should protect their women because the god-given actual nature of women is easily corruptible. According to the text, women do not care about the personal beauty or young age and they only long for sexual intercourses with men, no matter the men are good-looking or bad-looking (IX.14). At the mere sight of men, and on account of the inborn absence of affection and innate fickleness of heart, women, though well protected by their husbands, make transgressions against them (IX.15). The fickleness of heart and inborn absence of affection along with the fondness of ornaments, beds, and cushions, intense erotic feelings, anger, crookedness, and scandal (IX.17) are said to be the symptoms of female identity and femininity. The text seeks support in the Vedas and the Nigamas to avow the proneness of women to infidelity (IX.19-20). The six factors that would defile a woman are stated as wine-drinking, evil company, separation from husband, idle rambling, sleep at the improper time, and residence at another's house (IX.13).Women are considered unto inorganic things and they are not given any *mantras* for purificatory rites as men have (IX.18) and, thus, they are exempted from the duty to perform religious rites. They are only supposed to do the supportive role for their husbands to do their religious rites. Such preposterous verses, describing the nature of women, contribute in abundance for conceptualizing and defining the woman's cultural and religious status, identity, and sexuality. There is no doubt, if we think about the theories on language and semiotics, that the symbols given by the text would affect the minds of people and social formations.

The wife has the duty of giving birth to a son, similar in every respect to the husband who impregnates her (IX.9), and the concept behind this is that by entering into the body of his wife the husband is again born in her (IX.8). Even by contemplating transgressions against her lord, the woman is sinning, the expiation of which has been dealt with in the Vedas themselves (IX.21). As per the text, the chance of being good for a woman is obtained by being with men of good characters. As a river in contact with the sea becomes briny, a woman acquires traits of mind and character similar to those of the man she is united with (IX.22). Even women from lower origins are said to acquire excellent traits of character through contact with auspicious mental traits of their respective husbands (IX.24). This presupposes the inter-caste relationships as favourable if women of lower caste marry higher caste men. But, at the same time, this envisages the verity of the text as to visualize woman (of any origin) as having no right existence with her own character and identity. The women are supposed to either opt for mimetic subject-positioning which prolongs the notion of plausible gender identification, or 'camp it up' and, so, perform gender as excess in order to reveal gender identification as pretence.[16]

The elaboration of the duties of husband and wife in a household would seem to be uncanny for any gender insightful critical study. There are said to be four levels production, reproduction, socialization, and sexuality, encompassing the male supremacy and female subordination by gendering process.[17] The injection of laws in the text concentrates upon the fidelity of woman as wife and the duty of men to protect their women even by controlling them in every manner so as to keep the purity of their progeny and family. But, in some other verse, the primary duty of husband and wife is stated as mutual fidelity (IX.101).This could be found as a positive element as it equally insists on the fidelity of both men and women who are united in marriage. But the other verses previously stated prove that men are privileged and women are to be controlled in the case of their sexuality. Although the husband is not allowed to see women other than his wife, he has better options for remarriage.

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[16] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York and London: Routledge, 1999.

[17] Juliet Mitchell, "Women: The Longest Revolution" in *Women's Estate*, New York: Penguin, 1971, 75-122.

The women are called "the lights of the households" and repositories of bliss and auspiciousness and even they are compared to goddesses of fortune in the house. It is also proposed that they should be honoured (with presents of apparels and ornaments) for the purpose of conceiving progeny (IX.26). One can reflexively trace the fact that this concept is very much prevalent even in the present society. These attempts by a text to construct the family life might have doubtlessly affected many other lifestyles of women. There is much evidence indicating that women do not live just as wives in the world at any historical moment. The possibility of women remaining unmarried and single mothered cannot be located in the text. Also, the slave/servant woman and prostitute woman were not imagined during the composition of *Manusmrti*. These types of lifestyles were there in Indian region even from the ancient times. The '*ganika*' or '*devadasi*' woman concepts were acceptable and respectable in the then society. *Arthasastra* and *Kamasutra*, almost contemporaneous to *Manusmrti*, are evidential for the existence of such women in India during that time. *Arthasastra* mentions the prostitute women who hold great economic status, having counted as playing massive role in contributing to state revenue.[18] *Kamasutra* speaks of the life of *nagaraka* (city-man) in ancient India, who used to go to clubs and pleasure houses such as abodes of *ganikas*.[19] The kingdoms of medieval India show the existence of many '*dasi*' (servant) women in the history. The purpose of *Manusmrti* as a law-book, to make a society with very well structured family, could be drawn as troubling such 'other' lives of women. This shows the double suffering of such women out of the pressure of *Manusmrti*'s conceptualizations on a model family life.

It is true that there are a few verses (III.55-59) that talk about worshipping women in the family but not just for the function of making offspring as mentioned above. Among them, the famous verse says: "the deities delight in the places where women are revered, but where women are not respected all rites are fruitless" ("*Yatra naryashtu poojyante ramante tatra devatah // Yatraitastu na poojyanthe sarvasthatra bhalah kriyah*," III.56). The following verses advocate wherever women of the family are miserable, the family is soon destroyed, but it always prospers where women are not miserable (III.57). The text prescribes that men should respect women properly; otherwise, their homes would be cursed. One might, however, find contradictions in the concepts on 'woman' along the text by comparing these verses with the copious other verses in the text that have been stated earlier, where women are described in the form of mere erotic objects with no character and virtue. This could be interpreted as a general trickery observable throughout the text while talking about the codes of conduct for social and family life. Or, this may be to make sense of the option the text has mentioned in an earlier verse, to act either as per the scriptures or unto the conscience (*Manusmrti*, II.12) and convincing to one's own reason. Anyway, a gender-based analysis would not escape a critique on the dominating ideas put forward in the text.

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[18] N. V. Krishnawarrior, ed., *Kautilyante Arthasastram*, Malayalam translation Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy, 1935.

[19] Haran Chandra Chakladar, *Social Life in Ancient India: Studies in Vatsyayana's Kamasutra*, Delhi: Asian educational Services, 1929, 146.

6. Conclusion

Manusmrti, as an important textual resource for the existing structure of law and order in Indian society, proves to have caused immense impact on the construction of modern family. Nevertheless, as it is considered a religious text, its legal and social features also dominated the interpretations and social applications of many injunctions. The concepts of duty, that are disseminated by the language of the text, have still their impact in the minds of people in India, no matter what all socio-cultural changes that have being doctored in the past. The analysis of the verses of the text confirms that the ideas perpetuated and established by the *Manusmrti* continue to prevail, especially in the basic institutional concepts on family, in present Indian society as well. The text holds *dharma* as its main agenda, on the one side, and assigns duties for men and women in the institutions of family and society, on the other. The household and the duties of husband and wife that are elaborated in the text visibly elucidate its gender lethargy in the construction of family and the related discourse generated over time. Although the text might seem to have enormous stuff for social organization at any particular historical period, its misogynistic nature calls for more thorough and critical analysis with regard to its formative value among the members of Indian family and other social organizations.

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RETHINKING RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE IN THE AGE OF SCIENCE

Koshy Tharakan◆

1. Introduction

Relation of science and religion has been at the centre of many discourses in the past as well as in the recent times. Some of these were meant to refute religious claims in the light of scientific truths about the world, while others took the pain of explaining the essential compatibility between the two. The former subjects religion to the scrutiny of science while the latter reads science in religion or religion in science.[1] Both these attempts are ill-conceived as they conflate the logic of one with the other. Ian G. Barbour, who has pioneered the philosophical debate between science and religion, provides four typologies to relate the two domains of science and religion, namely, conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration.[2] Nevertheless, his position is one that treats the two as distinct disciplines and yet sharing a common ground rather than two separate and conflicting discourses. In what follows, we attempt to understand the nature of the interaction of these two, science and religion, from a phenomenological perspective. In order to do that, we have to look into the 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*) that engenders science and houses religious experiences.

2. Positivism and Phenomenology

Positivism is the dominant image of science that came along with the 'enlightenment rationality'. Central to the positivist philosophy is the conception that there is a firm line that separates facts from values. The fact-value dichotomy that informed positivism culminated in the 'verifiability theory of meaning' and the consequent rejection of

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[1] The argument for "Intelligent Design" voiced in Dover, USA, is an offshoot of reading religion into science, whereas the talk of scientific truths in the *Vedas* is an instance of reading science into religion.

[2] Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion*, New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

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'metaphysics' in the last century. According to logical positivists, statements are cognitively meaningful only if they are verifiable in principle. Thus, for them the meaning of a proposition lies in its method of verification. Connected to the 'principle of verification' is the positivist thesis that the world is a collection of individual facts. The positivist belief that observations are pure seems to make the principle of verification credible. However, the post-positivist philosophy of science has convincingly shown that our observations are theory-laden and many have questioned the availability of an independent world as our beliefs about the world itself are fashioned by our theories.

In contemporary philosophical writings, many have called the verifiability thesis into question as they regard the same as a 'dogma of positivism'. Phenomenology rejects positivism as the latter fails to grasp adequately how facts themselves are constituted. The positivist failure to problematise 'facts' resulted in the reification of facts and ignoring the role of human subjects in making facts meaningful. Phenomenology, on the other hand, tries to look at the ways in which facts are constituted in human consciousness. Husserl, the founding father of phenomenology, views science not just as a fact, but also as a problem that is in need of philosophical understanding. Phenomenology understands science as a cultural fact that has been shaped by human practice. It originates from the interaction of the members of the professional community of scientists. The scientific community is an open community insofar as the works achieved by the predecessors are taken up and continued by the successors. Criticisms, confirmations, and corrections find place in the activities of this community. Husserl identifies the spirit of modern science with Galilean Science that mathematizes nature.[3] Through mathematization of nature, nature itself becomes idealized. Mathematical model makes the study of nature a routine affair. Husserl compares the Galilean Science to a machine. The method of science, once formalized, renders science to a mathematical process. The successful operation of the machine guarantees the success of practical achievement, especially in the form of technology. Husserl criticizes the Galilean style of mathematizing the nature. It misunderstands the objective nature as something hidden from the 'life-world', a reality that is to be explored beneath the appearances of the life-world.

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[3] See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

3. Life-World: Home of Science and Religion

According to Husserl, the crisis of European sciences is borne out of the fact that it severed its relation to the life-world. The European sciences, thus, are uprooted. It erroneously substituted the world of everyday experiences, the life-world, with the idealized world of science. Thus, 'Nature' is identified with its constituted mathematical or quantifiable object. The technological success of science prompted to ignore the foundational acts that constitute scientific experiences from the pre-scientific experiences. To understand the real significance of the alienation of science from its soil, the life-world, we have to first analyze the life-world. Gurwitsch notes three prominent features of the life-world.[4] First of all, the life-world is extended in space and time. This spatio-temporal framework makes our experience of objects in the everyday world related to one another. Secondly, 'life-world' exhibits regularities amidst variations. Things have their 'habits of behaviour', as Husserl puts it. It is not from science that we learn that if a stone is lifted and consequently released, it would fall down. Thus, we gain the idea of universal causality from our everyday world of experiences. Knowledge of such regularities is significant in conducting our lives. Finally, things in the life-world exhibit a sort of relativity and subjectivity. Our observations in the life-world are perspectival. Each of us sees things in the life-world according to our standpoints. Thus, the same thing appears to each of us in a different manner. However, through our inter-subjective experiences we learn that all of us share the same world of objects, live in the common life-world, at least, with respect to a community of fellow inhabitants. Husserl writes about the origin of geometry to elaborate his points. According to Husserl, geometry originated in the practical needs of measurement in our everyday life. Every historical community, however ancient it may be, possesses some idea of measurement. The accuracy of our measurement depends upon the purpose for which we measure. The whole of science, like other cultural enterprises, exists through tradition. They have not merely arisen casually. Being a tradition, it has formed through human activity. Tradition is not something that had been handed down passively. It is dynamic in the sense that we renew our traditions by way of sustained inquiry. It thereby makes up a totality in which each present stage functions as the premise for the future project. Thus, all our scientific activities have a further project, which awaits its execution.[5] Phenomenological philosophy of science maintains that the life-world is prior to the world of science. The world of science is a theoretical construction that comes up later. However, this is not to rule out the reality of the scientific world, rather it maintains that it is only through the life-world that we have access to the world of science.

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[4] Aron Gurwitsch, "Galilean Physics in the Light of Husserl's Phenomenology" in *Phenomenology and Sociology: Selected Readings*, ed. Thomas Luckmann, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978, 72.

If science, thus, enables us to gather knowledge about the physical world, religion refers to a system of values by which man places himself in relation to nature and a reality that transcends nature. The factual knowledge provided by the sciences often count as the epitome of rationality while the religious values we cherish are explained away as mere articles of faith. Many a time we tend to be sceptical about religious claims and beliefs. Quite often, the doubts regarding the truth, or even the plausibility of such beliefs, germinate from our seemingly rational appraisal of religious notions. Thus, the religiously inclined ones tell us not to subject religion to the test of reason; rather we must surrender to the dictates of faith. Understanding the nature of religious beliefs in the above manner institutes a sharp boundary between the realms of faith and reason. We tend to banish reason while invoking faith to ground religious beliefs. In doing so, we seem to think that rationality is the sole privilege of our scientific beliefs where faith has no role to play. However, many a scientific theory develops from the faith the scientist has in holding certain beliefs. In addition, what we reason out to a great extent depends on what we believe as a matter of faith. An example from science itself illustrates this point. Though both Huygens and Hooke held that light travelled in waves, just like sound, Newton propounded the corpuscular theory of light that conceives the phenomenon of light as a stream of particles. Of course, Newton had certain rationale to believe so. For instance, sound that travels in a waveform can be heard around corners, light cannot normally be seen around a corner unless it is reflected from a surface. Nevertheless, Newton did not have all the evidence for his theory. More than a century later another scientist, Thomas Young, once again, came up with the wave theory of light. In fact, Young suggested that light travelled in transverse waves, like waves of water, and not in longitudinal waves as sound does. Of course, the current theory on light holds that light sometimes act like particles and sometimes like waves, which amply explains why scientists could not succeed conclusively in defining the nature of light for so long.[6] However, the point that needs our attention is why did Newton who performed much earlier the same experiment, as young did, hold on to particle theory even when his contemporaries argued in favour of wave theory? Philosophers of science point out that it is because of Newton's metaphysical faith in atomism that prompted him to adhere to the particle theory rather than the wave theory.

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[5] Edmund Husserl, "The Origin of Geometry" in *Phenomenology and Sociology*, 67-68.

4. Language-Game: Being of Science and Religion

Those who conceive faith and reason as antithetical to each other seem to think that unless these two are kept at a distance from each other it is impossible to defend religious beliefs in the era of science and technology. Apparently, it becomes imperative for them to argue for faith alone as constituting the domain of religion. However, faith devoid of reason degenerates into dogmatism and fundamentalism. Thus, we need to give reason its due respect and domain even in religion. This does not mean that we have to subject religious beliefs to the scrutiny of science. What I try to articulate may be illustrated by invoking Ludwig Wittgenstein's metaphor of 'Language-Game' that clarifies the nature of language and meaning.[7] Just as rules at once constitute and regulate games, our language is constituted and governed by a set of rules. We play each game according to the specific rules of that game. In following the set of rules of a game, the game itself is played out. Similarly, every language-game has its own set of rules and by following the rules of a language-game we bring to fore a particular fact. Though both volleyball and basketball are games we play with a ball, we differentiate between the two games on the basis of the rules applicable to each game. Similarly, we have to differentiate between science and religion. Here, I wish to submit that religion and science are two different language-games and, as such, it is meaningless either to do science by following the rules of a religious language-game or to practice religion by following the rules of a scientific language-game.[8] By the same token, what counts as an evidence of scientific rationality need not be the evidence for rationally holding a religious belief, nor can we contradict a religious belief by the rationality of science, as science and religion are two different language-games. It is a wasteful exercise to look for scientific compatibility as far as religious beliefs are concerned. Following rules, whether we play soccer or practise religion is a matter of rationality. Only rational beings can consistently follow rules. A soccer player who suddenly changes rules in the middle of a game and start playing according to different rules is seen as an irrational player. The necessity of rationality along with faith in religious beliefs is all the more felt in our contemporary cultural matrix.[9] One who exercises reason in his religious faith can see that different religions are not different language-games but belong to the same language-game of worship, devotion, humility, righteousness, and other attenuated values.

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[6] See Ray Spangenburg and Diane K. Moser, *The History of Science: From the Ancient Greeks to the Scientific Revolution*, Hyderabad: Universities Press, 1999, 68-75.

[7] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953.

[8] Though Wittgenstein gives many examples of different language-games such as 'telling a story', 'making a joke', 'reporting an event', etc., in *Philosophical*

5. Conclusion

The language-game interpretation of the practice of science and religion has its critics amongst scientists and theologians as well as philosophers. The advocates of science oppose it because it dethrones science from the privileged position it has enjoyed since its birth, as it becomes one language-game, albeit quite useful, amongst many other language-games. Accordingly, science as the sole rational way of understanding the world is no more defensible in the metaphor of language-game. However, post-positivist philosophy of science has rejected many such exalted image of science. The idea of objective truth, which science used to claim for its findings is shown to be highly problematical. A pragmatist like Quine says that in point of epistemological footing the physical objects that are posited by science and the gods of Homer differ only in degree and not in kind.[10] The superiority of the scientific over the cultural, then, may be seen

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Investigations, he does not cite 'science' and 'religion' as language-games. Later, Phillips and many others gave currency to the metaphor of a religious language-game.

[9] The recent controversy surrounding Sethusamudram in India is a best example of this confusion of the logic of two distinct language-games. In this regard, see Koshy Tharakan, "Science amidst Religion: The Politics of Knowledge," *Current Science* 94, 6 (March 2008), 714.

[10] W. V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in *Classics of Analytic Philosophy*, ed. Robert R. Ammerman, Bombay/New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1965, 196-213.

as to do with the efficacy of the former in structuring the experience that we have of the world.

Advantage of the metaphor of language-game is that it successfully resists any attempt to read science in religion or vice versa, which is an obscurantist enterprise that confuses the logic of two distinct language-games. However, it may be opposed by the religiously inclined on the ground that it does not justify the importance of religion. Religion, thus, may at best be conceived as a game but could not explain why it is important.[11] Here we may want to emphasize that the importance of religion apart from the spiritual values it fosters lies in its role of providing a "language of contrast" vis-à-vis other language-games. In other words, religion assumes a logical necessity for the appreciation of other spheres of life-world and vice-versa. As Phillips points out, the "force of religious beliefs depends, in part, on what is outside religion… So, far from it being true that religious beliefs can be thought of as isolated language-games, cut off from all other forms of life, the fact is that religious beliefs cannot be understood at all unless their relation to other modes of life is taken into account."[12] Thus, it can be argued that understanding religion as a distinct language-game does not diminish the significance of religion or reduce it to an isolated and contingent activity of language-game.

It is important to understand that it is the spiritual experience and not the doctrine of any religious tradition *per se* that is of significance to phenomenological analysis of religion. Religion tells us how to live in the world purposively and meaningfully. It informs us how to obtain nonmaterial satisfaction from the world. Unlike scientific knowledge, in this sense, religious experience is very much a part of the 'lived experience' of human beings. Nevertheless, human existence in terms of the lived experience is an integral whole. We do integrate different spheres into our lived experience, thus engendering meaning and purpose. In other words, life-world expands the horizon of both science and religion.

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[11] D. Z. Phillips, "Religious Beliefs and Language Games" in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, 132.

[12] Phillips, "Religious Beliefs and Language Games," 134.

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RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE
Neither True nor False, but Meaningful

Radharani P.[◆]

1. Introduction

The knowledge of knowing has attracted the attention of philosophers of all times. Knowledge begins with the acquisition of information and, hence, it is primary in philosophical, material, and other aspects of life. Intellectuals of the East as well as the West were very much drawn towards the interrelation of thoughts, words, sentences, and their meanings. It is through the medium of language that the thoughts and feelings can be expressed and, thus, human beings, unlike animals, with their special ability to express their thoughts and feelings through language, stands unique. Language is an abstract system employed primarily for communication and in the act of knowing, language occupies an important position.

Primary goal in man's life is attainment of truth, bliss, or self-realisation. In his march towards this goal, religion and language play a pivotal role. In the fast progressing scientific world, theism has survived and is still a motivating factor that commands the life of many modern erudite persons. Hence, it is interesting to explore the meaning possessed by religious languages. Whether theistic claims are compatible with scientific assertions is an ever debatable question among scholars. It is worthwhile to mention that there is no specific language that is used only for religious purposes. We may use any language in connection with religious practices such as prayer, ritual, worship, preaching, theological learning, etc. Human beings, in the process of communication with various sections of society, use the language suited to the needs. For example, the language of mathematics, which is thoroughly symbolic and short, will not be useful to a politician who has to give lengthy speeches mostly to the common folk.

Some consider the ultimate questions, which philosophy grapples with, as meaningless; but many consider them as powerful and meaningful. Many, however, agree that these problems cannot be verified or falsified empirically but still that it can quite well have a legitimate function. Religion is also concerned with such questions. According to

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Paul Tillich, "Religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of meaning of life."[1]

2. Religion and Symbols

Religion is not limited to the conscious psyche of the individuals but it is to a great extent influenced by the elements which are present in the depth of unconscious. Activities of human beings are not only directed by conscious psyche, but also by the suppressed impulses in the unconscious. As religion considers both these aspects, it requires a special language. The unconscious aspect can be expressed only through symbols; naturally, then, the language of religion has to be symbolic. It is difficult to express the unconscious clearly through ordinary language; it is, then, symbols that try to express what is inexpressible. Hence, it can be comprehended that symbol is the proper language of religion. G. Mac Gregor says: "In religion no one can avoid use of symbolism nor should one wish that it were possible to do so. The more lively a religion, the more complex its symbolism has to be, for it is thus that it secures what protection it can get against the ever present danger of literalism, which is fatal to the life of any religion."[2] Symbols are, thus, the only means through which religion can express itself directly.

The word *symbol* is derived from the Greek word *symbola*, meaning *tally*. Etymologically, it means *that which tallies or represents something.* In a wider perspective, language itself is symbolic and each and every word is a symbol because it stands for something. Russell writes: "Words all have meaning in the simple sense that they are symbols that stand for something other than themselves."[3] A symbol is that which represents something other than the word, the thing or gesture. A red flag is a symbol when it is not just looked into as a red coloured flag but when it stands for danger signal. The most important characteristic of a symbol is that, it does not stand for its own sake but points to something beyond itself. It is also true that a symbol participates in that which it represents. Therefore, an insult to a religious symbol is an insult to that particular religion itself.

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[1] Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, 4.

[2] G. Mac Gregor, *Introduction to Religious Philosophy*, New York: Macmillian, 1958, 328.

[3] B. Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903, 47

A symbol reveals to us the inner levels of reality which is unknown to scientific analysis. It opens up the inner dimensions of self which corresponds to the inner elements. Another feature of symbol is that it is not permanent and it arises from the function of group mind. A symbol is something which resembles what it represents but this resemblance can be understood only by a person who knows the situation in which the symbol is being used.

Symbols are not restricted to any particular area, but it is often used in religious language. No religion in this world can avoid symbolism. The word God itself is a symbol. It symbolizes the ultimate basis or the root cause of everything. A religious symbol may be a concrete object or some aspect of it. When a believer says that God is the father of all human beings, he tries to express the majesty of God, a feeling of security, an attitude of firm faith and submission.

Religious language for its expression uses both verbal and non-verbal symbols. Non-verbal symbols like moon, star, cross, etc., have great significance in religious language. Like other symbols, religious symbols also open up the hidden levels of reality. Religious symbols stand for that which transcends finitude. The referent of religious symbol does not belong to the universe of finite relations. The transcendent can be known through the finite. "Religious symbols open up experience of the dimension of the depth in the human soul. If a religious symbol has ceased to have this function then it dies."[4]

Employment of symbolic language is found in all religions. In Hinduism, to describe *trimurti* (triad) Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesvara, the mystical symbol *OM* (*a-um*) is commonly used. The various Hindu deities are also symbolic in name. *Brahma* is the symbol of creation, *Vishnu* of protection, *Siva* of destruction, etc. The most important symbol of Christianity is the cross which symbolizes divine sacrifice. A symbol does not subject the infinite to the finite but renders the finite transparent. It helps us to see the infinite through it. "Religious symbols are unique because the reality they represent is unique and there lies their power and their truth."[5]

Religious symbols have both integrating and disintegrating powers. It produces creative and destructive feelings among people, thus, propagating both positive and negative effect on our society. Religion has, thus, its own holiness and unholiness.

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[4] Paul Tillich, *Symbols of Faith in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Abrenethy, New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, 392.

[5] Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, New York: Harper and Row, 1957, 54.

Religious symbols have a tendency to become ultimate in themselves. If a symbol moves in that direction, it ultimately ends up in idolatry. This may be avoided if the symbols only participate in the ultimate to which they refer; on the other hand, if they replace them, they become idols. This is generally considered as the destructive aspect of religious symbol.

3. Religion and Positivism

With the arrival of logical positivism in the field of philosophy, one can see a change regarding the nature of religious language. The strict logical positivists who rely solely on criterion of verifiability rejected religious statements as meaningless. Logical positivists accept only two kinds of statements to be cognitively meaningful – analytic and synthetic. Religious statements do not belong to any of these categories. So, the logical positivists do not consider religious statements to be meaningful in the logical sense.

For logical positivists, analytic statement is meaningful by its own right because in analytic propositions the predicate is part of or synonymous to the subject. For example, a white cat is white. This kind of statements is true and meaningful but non-informative. The logical positivists pointed out that the *a priori* prepositions of logic and mathematics belong to this category. Whereas in synthetic statements, the predicate tells us something new or informative about the subject. For example, he went to see his mother, he will come tomorrow, etc. One can verify such statement by experience of our sense. For positivists, such statements alone are meaningful in the real sense.

Take the case of religious statements where believers use terms in a sense different from what they ordinarily convey. When a believer says that 'God is the creator of this universe', he does not take the term 'creator' in the same sense in which it is used in our ordinary language because God is supposed to be without a material body, without desires, etc. So, whenever a believer used the term 'creator' in connection with God, he certainly uses it in a different special sense. Such religious statements do not depend on actual experience and, hence, outside the field of verification, and for logical positivists, all empirically unverifiable statements are meaningless. Naturally, religious statements are considered meaningless.

The power of religious languages, however, cannot be brushed aside. For a believer, religious language is like a *sanctum sanctorum*, which gives him strength and protection to his day to day life. Whenever he is in trouble he finds solace in religious language. Bible, *Bhagavat Gita* and Qur'an are the best examples. One cannot out rightly reject it as meaningless, but can say that religious statements have their own distinctive meaning. That is why even the logical positivists have designated a special meaning to religious language, i.e., the emotive meaning. The difference between ordinary language and religious language is not clearly observable because words used in religious statements are also ordinary but in their application, they completely differ from what they ordinarily stands for. The fact is that the words that we use in religious language are common in themselves but only a believer can easily understand the real spirit of it. For example, an important official letter written by a soldier to his superiors will be comprehended by a common man in a different way than the officials can as he cannot understand the real spirit of that letter and the commitment involved in it. Similar is the case with religious language, where it is easily digestible for a believer. Take the example of *Sivalinga*, the symbol of Lord Siva. For a person who is ignorant of Hindu religion and culture this is just a stone, and has nothing to convey. Thus, in order to understand any language, proper involvement of the situation is necessary which is applicable to religious language also. It is at this juncture the religious language becomes similar to other languages.

4. Conclusion

There are different kinds of religious languages. It may, at times, take the form of a moral expression, sometimes it may point to the experience of believer or to historical facts; it can be the language of rites, rituals, and dedication. So, religious language performs many functions but above all it is the language of parables. The religious declarations such as *God is truth*, *God is love*, etc., are language of parables. The truth and falsity of such religious parables depend on personal religious convictions. If somebody said that God rescued him personally or if he declares that God is at times visible and tangible or God could appear and disappear at will, then, atheists may say that such kind of statements needs empirical verification because they are not empirically verifiable assertions and on the basis of verification principle they are false statements. But even though they are false, they are meaningful for a believer. Thus, there are many things which are unverifiable but we accept them and talk about them as we really know them. Hence, religious statements are not meaningless as they are not logically impossible statements. A language which performs some functions should be treated as meaningful. So, there is nothing wrong in saying that religious language is meaningful. It is true that only those who are inside the particular faith situation can understand its true spirit and this can be applicable to every language.

Basically, religious language is not adequate to express one's realisation to others. For a true devotee who has attained self-realization, religious languages are sometimes meaningless because they realise that it is difficult to form the concept of ultimate reality through language. Concrete concepts are not visible in religion, but the concept which we use in religion express different meanings and can be interpreted in different ways. What is distinctive in religions cannot be put into words. It is impossible to describe spiritual experiences through the form of language. The statements that we use in our day to day life are either true or false, but religious utterances are neither true nor false. Religious people, however, believe that religious statements are not only meaningful but also true. This leads us to the conclusion that, to a great extent, religious languages are based on faith.

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BOOK REVIEWS

A. Mathias Mundadan, ***Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara***, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2008, pages: xx + 525, ISBN: 978-81-89958-16-9.

This is a biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara (1805-1871), whose contributions to the reform movements in the 19th century Kerala, both within and outside the church, are being increasingly recognized. Of all the biographies of Blessed Chavara, this is the most exhaustive, scientific, and documented one. Being a fitting tribute paid to the Blessed Chavara by the mellowed church historian Mathias Mundadan, the book is all the more creditable. Majorarchbishop Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil and the superior general of the CMC Congregation, Mother Edward, in their messages and the prior general of the CMI Congregation, Antony Kariyil, in his foreword are all praise and appreciation for the book and its author. Here below we shall first have a summary of its contents, drawing mostly on the author's own words appearing in the introductory section and in the beginning of certain chapters.

The "Introduction," that precedes the 12 chapters, presents the physical, political, socio-cultural, and religious features of the Kerala society from the late 18th century to the late 19th century, which, according to the author, is important to understand the person, life, and mission of Chavara. It also gives an overall view of the subject matter covered in the book and a look into the methodology employed.

In Chapter 1, "Advent of a Great Sage," taking into account the fact that the environment in which one is born and brought up in the early years of one's life plays a definite role in shaping one's personality, the author gives 1) a brief description of the place and time at the birth of Chavara, 2) his family line, and 3) his early childhood. Chapter 2, "The Divine Call," first discusses in detail the time and the manner of Chavara's call to priesthood, speaks about the great sage and teacher Malpan Father Thomas Palackal, and Blessed Chavara's seminary life in Pallipuram under his able guidance. These two chapters, thus, describe Chavara as a saint and prophet in the making. The childhood and early education at home under the pious parents, and the priestly formation in the seminary under the paternal care of Malpan Palackal laid a firm foundation for the emergence of the saintly and prophetic personality of the Blessed Chavara.

The next three chapters deal with the vital role Chavara played in the foundation of the congregation of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate

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(CMI) and its dynamic growth into a spiritual movement enshrined in a charismatic community committed to the renewal and building up of the church and the society at large. Chapter 3, "Foundation of CMI Congregation," briefly discusses the following: 1) Christian religious life in India before the CMI congregation was founded, 2) the saintly trio Father Thomas Palackal, Father Thomas Porukara and Blessed Kuriakose Chavara and their involvement in the foundation of the CMI, and 3) the foundation that was begun at Mannanam in 1831. Then, the author raises the question whether Blessed Chavara can be considered one of the three founders, and convincingly answers it in the affirmative. In doing so, on the one hand, he refuses to give the credit of founding the congregation exclusively either to the elderly Fathers Palackal and Porukara or to the young Blessed Chavara and, on the other, argues that all the three of them are the founders.

Chapter 4, "Leadership of Chavara and Growth of the Congregation," deals mostly with the eight new foundations: Koonammavu (1857), Elthuruth (1858), Plassanal (1858-59), Vazhakulam (1859), Pulinkunnu (1861-66), Ampazhakadu (1868), Mutholy (1869), and Chettippuzha (1870). It ends with an account of the high-handedly effected interim affiliation of the congregation to the Order of the Carmelites Discalced (OCD) and the latter's failed proposal to make it an OCD province. Chapter 5, "An Ideal Religious and Superior," is a persuasive narrative of Blessed Chavara's religious authenticity and leadership qualities.

Chapters 6 to 9 discuss in detail Blessed Chavara's concern and direct services to the church and society. A major service he rendered to the church in Kerala was the heroic fight against the Rocco's schism which had seriously threatened the unity and integrity of the church of Malabar. It was precisely as the only effective means of handling this critical situation that the Vicar Apostolic of Varapuzha appointed Chavara as vicar general for the St. Thomas Christians. He, with his fellow religious, fought against the schism with courage and holy determination, and marvelously succeeded. This great undertaking is described in chapter 6, "A Staunch Defender of the Unity of the Church."

Chapter 7, "In the Service of the Society," gives a profile of the projects Blessed Chavara pioneered for the renewal and reform of the church and the society. They included preaching and retreats, formation of an enlightened clergy, schemes to meet the financial needs of the church, and reform of liturgy. He was equally concerned about the problems of illiteracy, inequality, and discrimination among the people, especially against the poor, the sick, and the neglected. To ameliorate their desperate condition, he took initiative to establish institutions and certain social action programs. "Foundations of CMC-CTC Congregations" is the title of Chapter 8. It tells the story of Blessed Chavara, with the collaboration of Father Leopold Beccaro OCD, founding the convent at Koonammavu. It is seen in the context of the pathetic condition of women in the 19th century. The convent was meant to lead them to the frontline of the society and to empower them spiritually and culturally. Those joining the convent were presented with the contemplative ideal of Carmel as the goal of life. While striving to realize it they were also to serve the society by educating girls and, thus, to become a great source and force in the renewal and reform of the church and society.

Chapter 9 describes Chavara as an "Apostle of Christian Literature and Print Media." He was well aware of the crucial role of knowledge in reforming the society. For its dissemination he opened education institutions. He gave equal importance also to the production of literature and print media. He himself wrote volumes and established printing presses. All his life, especially during the last decade of it, he wrote in prose and poetry. This chapter presents and reviews his writings which reveal his personality.

Entitled as "Last Journey to the Father's Home," Chapter 10 is a moving portrayal of Chavara's last days. They were days of intense suffering. He had many physical aliments from the seminary days. But they never stood in the way of his equally intense prayer and undertakings. In the last year, from end of 1869 to the end of 1870, his health hazards became severe. Still he carried on his duties. Finally, he was on his deathbed for about three months, suffering much pain and discomfort. The heroic patience and sweet smile on his face were marvellous. Early morning on 3 January 1871 he breathed his last at St. Philomena's monastery, Koonammavu, surrounded by his fellow religious and friends, grief-stricken and praying. The next day, he was buried in St. Philomena's church. The funeral was attended by a huge and overflowing crowd, all admires of this humane person.

Chapter 11, "To the Honours of the Altar," describes the canonization process and its successful end. Already during his time people looked at Chavara as a saint. After death, this esteem was manifested by many in different ways. Father Leopold, his spiritual director, after describing the death briefly in his diary, prayed as follows: "O holy and graceful soul, pray for me!" Biographies of his edifying life and deeds were composed in 1871 itself. However, years passed before the canonization process officially started. Requests for it came from different quarters. Finally, on 9 December 1955, the Cause was introduced. It culminated on 8 February 1986 with the declaration of his holiness pope John Paul II at Kottayam that Chavara be called Blessed.

Chapter 12, the final chapter, "Personality of Chavara," is the heart and culminating point of the work. It unravels the multifaceted and integral personality of the Blessed. Presenting in detail the prophetic, physical, humane, moral-ethical, especially Christian, and prayer-contemplative dimensions of the Blessed, the author has successfully depicted an impressive portrait. The last dimension, the prayer-contemplative one, enshrined in the spirituality of this *karma-yogi* is the pivot, the focal point, around which the whole of his life and mission are anchored. That the book has established it beyond doubt is Mathias Mundadan's real achievement. For it, the readers certainly owe an immense debt of gratitude to him, indeed.

With its scholarly approach and simple style, the book appeals equally to the academic and the laity. It provides an intellectually solid as well as spiritually inspiring reading. It also gives a complete bibliography on the subject matter and an elaborate index of words, facilitating easy and quick reference. The broader perspective in which the life and works of Blessed Chavara has been treated makes the book interesting not only for the members of the congregations founded by him, but also for the students of the history and socio-cultural traditions of Kerala. All the same, the author does not claim to have said the last word on all questions related to the life and mission of the Blessed. He thinks that the study goes on, and invites suggestions and directions to improve the work further.

Finally, the book has been beautifully laid out and artistically brought out. However, there have crept in a few printing errors of rather technical nature, which hopefully shall be corrected in the next edition. As the author himself admits, some chapters were written in isolation from others, which accounts not only for the repetition of certain discussions and references to the same events and texts, but also a rather pluriform way of presentation. Avoidance of such stylistic defects, minor as they are, would render the book still more elegant. We wish the book a wider readership and circulation.

Thomas Kochumuttom

Saviour Menachery, *"Remembering the Poor" (Gal. 2:10): Pauline Preaching of an Integral Gospel*, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009, pages: xix + 219, ISBN: 978-88-209-8153-2.

The interpretation of any written text should take into account the context. This is especially important for the interpretation of biblical texts, which can have normative value in the life of believers. 'Context' here is to be taken primarily in the sense of the words in which the biblical text is found. But context also includes many other factors which influenced the shaping of the *original meaning* of the text and the shaping of the attempts to come to grips with the *relevance* of that original meaning in the milieu of any given reader.

Saviour Menachery's book has as its goal the interpretation of the phrase "remembering the poor" in Galatians 2:10. Well aware of the need to interpret this text in its many contexts, he dedicates two preliminary parts of his book to prepare for his actual discussion of the text in question.

In Part I, Menachery outlines "The Socio-Theological Setting of Pauline Apostolic Preaching." Here, he goes into a thorough discussion of various external and internal factors which influenced the shaping of Paul's original meaning in Galatians, e.g., the makeup of the Greco-Roman society of Paul's time, Paul's concept of being an 'apostle', the dynamics of preaching, and Paul's internalization of what the word 'gospel' means.

Then, in Part II, Saviour, a true son of the Pontifical Biblical Institute that he is (before doing doctoral studies at Saint Thomas he acquired a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture from PBI), makes a detailed analysis of key Greek words which bear on the text. There is no substitute for consultation of the original language in which the biblical text was written. By exploring the meaning of these Greek words, Saviour gives a good approximation of the mind of Saint Paul, a mind which was determinative for the writing of Galatians 2:10 as nothing else was; for, it was Paul's understanding of himself and of his role in the Christianity of the first-century Mediterranean world which framed the text in question. It is in and through the language Paul used that one best arrives at this understanding.

Only after this elaborate but indispensable preparation does the author address the text itself. He situates briefly some past and present interpretations of Galatians 2:10 against their historical backgrounds.

Then, he gives a detailed explanation of how he views Paul's words in the immediate context.

This is a work of biblical theology. That is to say, it focuses on the religious meaning of the text in question. This religious meaning is the bridge which makes possible the discerning of the relevance of Galatians 2:10 in the world of today. Here the context grows more complicated, not only to identify the poor of today, but the issues as to how to help them. There is no particular difficulty in deciding how to come to the aid of those who are in danger of dying from hunger from one day to the next: supply what is needed as quickly as possible. Much more challenging is how to come to the aid of the economically poor on a long-term basis.

Saviour Menachery keeps referring to the need of coming to the assistance of the poor as part of the "integral gospel." The choice of "integral" is significant. Not "essential." By implication one can be a follower of Christ in essentials even if one does not come to the aid of the poor. Should there ever be a day when there are no really poor persons, would it, therefore, be impossible to be a Christian?

Worship of the Father as revealed by his Son and worship as intended by the Son would seem to be at the essence of what it is to be a Christian. That means worship of the Father in the context of fellow worshippers and one's worship of the Father dictates an attitude to one's fellow beings. Be they poor or not, there is an obligation to a more fundamental approach to others than just thinking about their poverty. The author touches on this more fundamental approach at the end of his study of Galatians 2:10, when he notes that *being a slave meant not being a human person*. He hints at the deepest level of a Christian attitude to one's fellow beings, Christian and non-Christian alike – the attitude that each one is a *person*. This is the distinctive gift of Christianity to the world: the development under the guidance of the Spirit to the realization of the implications of the terms 'Father', 'Son' and 'Spirit' in the preaching of Christ, and the beginning of the realization of what that means for living as a Christian in all the worlds which followed, temporally and geographically, on that preaching. In living with persons as persons, in the context of Father, Son, and Spirit – in the way revealed by the Son – Christianity is at its deepest level. Here is the essence of what it is to be a Christian.

Saviour Menachery's book is explicitly about a text dealing with the poor in the context of one of the writings of Christianity's most dedicated believers. It is the merit of the book that it helps the reader get to the underlying theology of this dedicated believer's attitude to the poor. In so doing, Saviour has suggested further depths in which Christian dedication should be framed.

James Swetnam

Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, ed., *Pluralism of Pluralism: A Pluralistic Probe into Philosophizing*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2006, pages: xxi + 393, ISBN: 81-7086-392-9.

While the west 'academically' celebrates pluralism, in India it is really celebrated in life. In the west it is a concept to be reflected upon, to be investigated into and to be discussed and clarified. In India, we live 'pluralism' in all its existentiality; India is perhaps the only nation where plurality of every kind harmoniously coexists. Hence, pluralism in India is not mealy an academic theme to be scientifically worked out, but an existential issue to be lived with.

In the philosophical sense, the term pluralism has two distractive features, or two uses: pluralism of reality and pluralism of approach to reality. In general, pluralism can be defined as the existence of a condition in which numerous distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural groups are present and tolerated within a society. In other words, it amounts to the condition of being multiple or plural and the belief that such a condition is desirable or socially beneficial. Today, everyone knows that there are people who think and act differently. In the real sense, pluralism is a middle way between realism and relativism.

Pluralism of Pluralism examines various aspects or forms of "pluralism." Cultural pluralism denotes that man is in constant journey. Imagination, exile, political refugees, rapid population growth, economic growth, brain drain, globalization, political upheaval, and natural disasters have given birth to different cultures, resulting in what is called 'cultural pluralism'. Ecological pluralism promotes and fosters eco-centricity. The need of the hour is a deeper commitment to protect and preserve nature. It is a commitment to the sanctity of life, a commitment to unity irrespective of caste, creed, and nationality.

Pluralism within feminist thought emerged from reflection that sex differences between women and men should make opportunities, power, self-concept and material conditions. Emergence of feminism in India can be attributed to pluralism. Movements like 'CHIPKO' became the springboard for the birth of eco-feminism in India.

Religious pluralism refers to the fact that there is a variety of beliefs and practices that go under the name of religion. Two main feature of religious pluralism are exclusivism and inclusivism. Exclusivism is the view that there is only one religion which is true or which can be an effective means of salvation. Inclusivism is the view that only one religion possesses the final truth and other religions are more or less true to the extent they approximate to their one religion.

This book presents education as enabling people to open up to the reality of plurality. Openness to plurality elicits an attitude of tolerance with highly developed sense of care and concern for other individuals. Under the title "Mass Media and Plurality of Values" it is affirmed that one of the important areas in which education has to assert itself is that of mass media. The new media culture has affected and altered our value properties drastically. The media are powerful tools for communication: to promote good as well as evil, to build as much as to destroy.

Pluralism is definitely part of our modern democratic experience. The scholarly way of dealing with the varied issues in view of containing diversity within a religion, within a culture, within a language that we come across with in this edited volume is commendable. Indeed, they are all expressions of our experience of pluralism; but what makes this collection attractive is the philosophical acumen with which the authors analyse the issues involved and the 'philosophical distance' that ultimately leads to viable solutions.

Ajeesh Kurian

Lambert J. Leijessen, *With the Silent Glimmer of God's Spirit: A Postmodern Look at the Sacraments*, trans. Marie Baird with a foreword by George S. Worgul, New York: Paulist Press, 2006, pages: xii + 147, ISBN: 0-4437-9.

With the Silent Glimmer of God's Spirit: A Postmodern Look at the Sacraments provides a fine introduction to the ongoing task of sacramental liturgical enculturation. After exploring the challenges facing liturgical sacramental theology in our times, the text explores each of the sacraments by grouping them as sacraments of initiation, sacraments of healing, and sacraments of vocation. In a consistent manner, the text offers a brief historical overview and then takes up the task of expressing the meaning of these holy gifts in the context of postmodernity.

This book is divided into ten chapters apart from an epilogue, notes, and study questions. The first chapter deals with "Life Rituals: Metaphoric Celebration of Existence." Here the author explains that sacraments are comparable with other religions and they share a number of common characteristics and functions with them. He considers the relationship between religion and faith in the sacraments from the perception of the celebration of the so-called rites of passage.

In the second chapter, he tries to introduce the new vision on sacramental theology with the help of other theologians, especially Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, and Piet Fransen. In traditional scholastic theology, the sacraments were defined as "efficacious means or cause that communicates the grace that they stand for." As a corrective to the Aristotelian epistemology and metaphysics, Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, and Piet Frasen offered new models or vision on the sacraments and grace. These models have found generally widespread acceptance in the field of sacramental theology.

Leijessen categorizes the sacraments into three: sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist), healing (Reconciliation and Anointing), and vocation (Marriage and Holy Orders). The grace of each sacrament becomes an offered gift of the Holy Spirit, by which the Christians' daily life is illuminated with the "inner glow" or "divine light," which imparts of Christ today in the power of the Spirit, specifically by being integrated with the representation of Christ that happens in and through every believer on the basis of the common priesthood. He sets out the ecumenical implications of this new insight, in the last chapter of this book, as his challenge to the mainstream churches (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and the Churches of the Protestant Reformation) in the face of their almost endemic disease of scandalous division in sacramental praxis.

This book projects the glowing image of sacraments in the Catholic Church through which the spiritual exhalations of the Holy Spirit flowing on the people. It contains not merely the ideas and convictions of the author rather the facts which provide us true inspiration about the sacraments. The author provides the reader with a refreshing insight into the contemporary problematic in the theological interpretation, pastoral application, and liturgical celebration of the sacraments. Thus, he does not only lead the reader to the heart of the problem, but also indicates possible hermeneutical measures for its authentic reconciliation and resolution. He explains the problems and difficulties in this postmodern time in the practice of sacraments. The author also looks at the current realities faced by those responsible for administering the sacraments and considers the pastoral implication. Indeed, Leijessen's text comes handy in helping us better understand our lived experiences in celebrating and sacraments.

Dipin Sebastian Karingen

James Thoppil, ***Towards an Asian Ecclesiology: The Understanding of the Church in the Documents of the FABC (1970-2000)***, Bangalore: Orient Publication, 2005, pages: xx + 364, ISBN: 81-7086-363-5.

The understanding of the church in the documents of the FABC (1970-200) highlights the understanding of the documents of the federation of Asian Bishops' conference (FABC). This book consists of the systematic study on the emerging Asian ecclesiology as found in the FABC documents. There are five parts for this book. In each part we see the systematic study on the Asian context. James Thoppil, the author of this book, has worked his best to put up this book in a systematic way. A very extensive bibliography in this book is a fine example for his hard work.

The first part deals with the Asian context and its challenges. We see the challenges and problems that the Asian Churches face. It begins by giving information about the present situations, geographical, political, social, and cultural contexts and the challenges faced by the Asian church in these spheres. After a brief examination of what "Asian-ness" and Asian identity mean, the general Asian context in which the church finds itself and the multiple challenges it face, the author delves deep into their causes and the ways and means that are to be adopted to respond to these challenges. He writes: "For most Asians colonization was an experience of oppression, bondage and exploitation. They looked up on Christianity and Christian missionaries as agents of oppression, bondage and alienation and as closely linked to western powers." At present, according to the author, this is the one of the greatest crises that Asian church faces.

The second part deals with the Asian ecclesial context and the FABC. In this part we are introduced to the origin of Christianity in the Asian soil. The author insists: "The church in Asia is as old as Christianity." There is an elaborate description of various churches, their growth, and activities. Here also we see the functions of the FABC, the origin of which dates back to the historic gathering of 180 Asian Bishops in Manila in November 1970, on the occasion of the visit of Pope Paul VI.

Part three deals with the understanding of the church in the FABC statements. In the *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican Council II, we come across with an explanation of two inseparable aspects (the visible and invisible) of the church. It deals with the community life, community of God (Trinitarian God), and church as a community. This, according to the author, is a basic idea that underlies the foundation and functions of the FABC.

In the fourth part we see the emerging Asian ecclesiological trends. There is no church without Christ. Christ is the centre of our every activity. The author analyzes the post-Vatican belief and understanding of in salvation. The author explains well the exclusivist, absolutist, normative and inclusive approaches to this problem. Vatican Council II has opened up the avenues of salvation even outside the church. This thinking has made the Asian theologian to make the Asian Church more open, and to be an incultured community, a lacerative community, a dialogue community, a kingdom-centred community, and a community of harmony.

Part five, entitled "Towards an Asian Ecclesiology," highlights the contribution of FABC towards the development of an Asian ecclesiology. This part provides an evaluation of the address of Pope John Paul II to the delegates of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the FABC. "The thrust of the FABC has centred around the mission of the church." The discussion in this part points to the need for the inculturated Christian community in Asia and the author opines that, in Asian attempts, developing a Christology that is Asian would be very essential.

At end, the author provides up-to-date information and statistics about the politico-ethnic, socio-economic and catholic hierarchy in Asia. So, we can say that this book enriches us with a lot of information. The author has convincingly shown that the Christian community in Asia is a community, centred on the values of "God's kingdom" and "universal harmony." Indeed, the systematic and scientific style that is followed all through the book makes it more attractive to the theologians as well as lay readers who are interested in the organic development of an Asiatic Church.

Lijo Thomas Brahmakulam

Razu John Mohan, ***On the Way to Critical Praxis: Field Education as a Relevant Theological Pedagogy at the United Theological College, Bangalore***, Bangalore: United Theological College, 2002.

This pioneering work, *On the Way to Critical Praxis: Field Education as a Relevant Theological Pedagogy at the United Theological College, Bangalore*, deals with diverse issues that are found in the socio-cultural milieu that contribute to critical theological education. It is integrative in its approach: theory-practice, action-reflection-action, and text content are interlinked in a systematic manner. It provides a key to understanding the intricacies of this process. It presents compelling directions for a critical theological theory of praxis through field education that can guide and challenge students of theology and Christian ministry in India today.

This book has been divided into two parts: the first part dealing with theoretical reflections and the second part with experiential reflections. The articles provide with the contexts of the Christian praxis to be realized through the envisaged "option for the poor." It gives a clear idea about the Rural Developmental Programs undertaken by many dioceses in India. The articles that we come across with in this book are mostly in the form of reports that have been already submitted or presented. They also describe various social service programs that have been already implemented for the welfare of people.

Field education has been an integral part of theological education at United Theological College (UTC), Bangalore. The UTC has been constantly striving to offer its students well planned field exposure, which would enable them to encounter new life contexts that would challenge them to broaden the horizon of their thinking as well as their involvement, both in the church and in the society at large. The purpose of this field education is to help students evolve a meaningful theological framework, providing them with analytical tools as well as critical skills to strengthen their motivation to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to be responsive to the contextual needs, challenges, and resources. This present volume provides the reader with a glimpse into the dynamics of such an ongoing encounter over several years. This book makes a significant contribution, especially to the ministerial training in the present-day Indian context.

The original impetus for this book was prompted by the firsthand expediencies of the students in examining and analyzing societal issues within theoretical frameworks and perspectives. This book, therefore, should be read theologically, developmentally, and sociologically with the implication that the chapters represent reflections emanating from field exposures. On the whole, this book attempts to provide a critical-reflection process that takes place in context specifics.

On the Way to Critical Praxis successfully unveils a new outlook to the whole social work programme undertaken by the Christian believers. The suggestions provided in the book would function as eye-openers to those who work in the field of Christian social apostolate. This edited book is, indeed, a source book that would provide us with thought provoking insights.

Lonesh Mathew Mullanthara

Gregory Arby, *The Beauty of Communion: Form and Expression in Hans Urs Von Balthasar*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007, pages: 323.

The Beauty of Communion deals with the concept of beauty in Hans Urs Von Balthasar. In the first chapter, Arby introduces the form and expression of Von Balthasar's concept of beauty. Von Balthasar is known as the theologian of beauty. He was born in Lucerne, Switzerland on 12 August 1905 and later appointed as a cardinal by Pope John Paul II. He introduced a new term 'Trilology' as his theological project in which he meditated upon the transcendental qualities of God such as Beautiful, Good, and the True. Von Balthasar describes beauty as theological aesthetics rather than aesthetical theology. 'Seeing the form' is the key concept of the beauty, according to Von Balthasar. One cannot conceive the meaning of the form without conceiving the beauty. In the process of perception, the beholder encounters both moments at the same time because the content does not come from behind the form but within it.

The true beauty comes from 'GOD'. Thus, he explains beauty as love, self communication, and mystery. Von Balthasar says that beauty is the manifestation of the divine beauty of the Creator. It is seen in the mystery of the 'Trinity' and in the Word which became 'Flesh'. That means that 'CHRIST' is the centre of all beauty that is reflected in the cosmos and in history. That can be understood only at the cross in the light of resurrection. This concept of Von Balthasar is taken by the author Gregory Arby and, thus, has developed his idea of beauty.

In the second chapter, Arby gives a detailed description about the beauty of Christ as the supreme form of God's revelation. Being the archetype of beauty, it is in this form that all beautiful forms of life will converge and find their significance. The complete or perfect harmonious or proportionate and radiant object of beauty is Christ himself. The beautiful form of Christ is the expression of God and the triune love of God. It is this beauty of God that appears in man and the beauty of man which is to be found in God and God alone.

The third chapter deals with the beauty of church as an expression of Christ's form. It consists in the beautiful form of Christ and, thus, her role is mediatory. She is the living organism of Christ. While discussing about the church Arby gives much importance to Mary as the perfect model of church. In relation to Christ, Mary is known as the new Eve and cosmic mother. But the beautiful church is at the same time black and sinful, even though the church is always purified by the cross of Christ which gives hope of holiness and beauty.

The fourth chapter attempts to seek the beauty of Christian life in the context of its meaning. It is seen in the life of faith. The life of faith is the result of perceiving the form of Christ as the form of revelation. The light of faith comes from the form of Christ. Here also Arby highlights Mary as the perfect model of faith. When the Christian finds a model in Mary, his or her life of faith can be measured in relation to the life of Mary.

The fifth chapter deals with the beautiful form of Christian life in its form of expression in communion. Only in a communion in relation with the triune God and one's neighbour, one can attain the beautiful expression of Christian life. It is the parameter of being a good Christian. Here the author adds the quantity of parishioners and the lack of neighbourhood communion and advices to create an environment in every parish where one can appropriate, grow, and express faith.

In nutshell, this book shows how the beauty of Christian life as a form participates in the supreme beauty of Christ's form and how it expresses its beauty through the medium of the church in a life of communion. The author has succeeded in presenting in a very clear manner the beauty of Christian life in relation to the extraordinary beauty of the central supreme form of revelation in Christ. Finally, Gregory Arby says: "The vocation to be a 'true Christian' is the mission of all Christians and it is through the life of faith and communion that this mission is realized."

Rintle Mathew Muttathottil

Joseph Lobo, ***Encountering Jesus Christ in India: An Alternative Way of Doing Christology in a Cry-for-Life Situation Based on the Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu***, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2004, pages: xv + 481, ISBN: 81-7086-358-9.

Encountering Jesus Christ in India tries to develop a contextual Christology in line with the thinking of Vatican II and it is based on the writing of George M. Soares-Prabu on biblical Christology. He says that the main aim of one religion is to transform the human mind to lead a good life in the community. Soares-Prabu pointed out the bad situation of religion, especially in India. The man problems of Indian Christians are not adopting the Indian style to the sacraments. Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel. He explains various reasons why religion has not been effective in transforming human life.

In fist chapter the author explains the socio-economic, cultural, and religious background of India. India is known as the cradle of the religions. Caste system is a burning burden of India. B. R. Ambedkar once remarked that in Europe one sees a division of labours but in India there is division of labourers. The left ideologies and of Gandhian principles could not bring a sustainable holistic transformation in the Indian society. The author takes and recasts these ideas from the soares Prabhu. Although all ideals are true and good, some exaggeration of one or the other brought in the lack of human concern among the Indian religions.

In the second chapter, he undertakes a critical study of the Christological development. Here, he pools contributions from various persons which have been contributory to the development of Christianity, from the Greek philosophy to the modern philosophy. An added reason for limiting this treatment is said to be the fact that the Christological articulations of the councils that took place during the period of Nicaea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.

In the third chapter, Lobo argues that the exegetico-theological method suggested by George Soares-Prabhu is of vital importance to develop such a discourse in the Indian context; he discusses the philosophical and biblical bases of contextual Christology (theology), some essential elements of a metaphorical Christology discourse, and explains the methodological considerations of Soares-Prabhu. Finally, he examines how this method becomes essential for developing a metaphorical and Christological discourse in the Indian context.

The forth chapter undertakes a description of the relevant theology for India which, according to him, should make use of the evocative language of metaphors. Mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ is transformative, rather than merely informative. Here, he undertakes a discussion of some important problematic issues regarding theological language. He compares the Old Testament and the New Testament approaches an the metaphorical usages.

Faith in deed, he concludes following Soares-Prabhu, endures, while theology can and should change, insofar as faith is a human response to, and is enabled by, God's self-revelation. This, indeed, is a good and interesting book to understand the ground-breaking theological outlook of Soares-Prabhu which has been very much influential in the formulation of an Indian Christology.

Sinto Vaidyakkaran

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